

# **The ‘Reality Oriented’ Imagination: a Philosophical Examination of the Imagination in ‘Mentalization’ and ‘Neuropsychanalysis’.**

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I, Annie Hardy, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

### **Abstract**

This thesis is concerned with the conceptualization of the imagination in contemporary psychoanalytic theory, focusing in particular on its connection with knowledge. I will propose that imaginative processes form the core of psychic 'health' by instantiating a state of mind in which the subject is genuinely open to 'learning from experience'. At the centre of the investigation is a psychic process that I term the 'reality oriented' imagination: a form of conscious mental activity that facilitates an epistemological connection with both the internal and external worlds and renders the unobservable psychological experiences of others accessible.

The concept of the 'reality oriented' imagination significantly disrupts Freud's portrayal of the imaginative processes as a form of wish-fulfilment in which the individual's attention is drawn away from external reality and placed under the sway of the pleasure principle. Such differing presentations of the imagination across psychoanalytic models can arguably be understood by considering several major shifts in psychoanalytic theorizing since Freud's time. I will propose that these changes can be characterised as an 'epistemic turn': a general movement in psychoanalysis towards framing the internal world as strategic rather than compensatory, and a corresponding understanding of psychopathological processes as a response to failures in understanding and prediction rather than instinctual conflict.

Sound psychological functioning, according to such a picture, is characterised by a lack of rigid internal interpretive schemas: it is, paradoxically, the individual who does not need to 'know' who is most open to experience as it presents itself. This leads to a characterization of healthy conscious experience that resonates more with Winnicott's 'creativity' than Freud's 'secondary process': a form of engagement with internal and external reality that combines veridical perception with an affective sense of self and agency.

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*Because I know that time is always time*

*And place is always and only place*

*And what is actual is actual only for one time*

*And only for one place*

*I rejoice that things are as they are and*

*I renounce the blessed face*

***T.S. Eliot "Ash Wednesday"***

## **Introduction: Part One**

*“Reason is to imagination as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance”*

- (Shelley 1821 quoted in Cocking 1991: vii)

Sophocles' play *Oedipus Rex* can be seen to narrate the founding myth of psychoanalytic theory: the ill-fated Oedipus, after hearing from the Oracle that he will murder his father and have sexual relations with his mother sets off determined to avoid his fate, only to bring about the very thing he feared. From a Freudian perspective, this can be seen to echo his theory that the Oedipus Complex is the universal structuring force of the unconscious mind; a psychic fate that none of us can escape in spite of all our repressive efforts (Freud 1924b). Freud read *Oedipus Rex* as an instinct theorist, a position from which he placed a great deal of importance on infantile sexuality in understanding both adult health and psychopathology (Freud 1905b, 1915b, 1924). Clinical psychoanalysis, on this view, is the search for cure through insight into repressed sexual conflicts, with the analyst acting as a skilled archaeologist who is able to till the patient's associations for traces of thoughts, feelings and desires that have been banished to the unconscious mind (Freud 1937). Paul Ricoeur (1970) has stressed that this 'archaeological' view leads to a 'backwards' reading of the Oedipus drama, which Henri Enckell has described as follows:

The drama opens with the ongoing plague; it is clear that the epidemic is a punishment, and in the archaeological reading, the play is the story of the search for the crime. As the crime has already been committed, all eyes are turned backwards. In the archaeological reading, the slaughter of Laius is not the only misdeed, but the fundamental "crime" is childhood sexuality (with its own

consequences). The tragedy of man is posited desire, a starting point we cannot avoid. In this reading, we thus look for past deeds and childhood desire, facts that define us. The central figure of this reading is the Sphinx, representing the enigma of childhood sexuality (Enckell 2007: 66)

Freud's strict focus on infantile sexuality as *the* ultimate driving force behind psychopathology has largely fallen out of favour since his death, leading to broad changes in both psychoanalytic theory and practice (Fonagy & Target 2003; Greenberg & Mitchell 1983; Rayner 1991). In line with this, Ricoeur has proposed an alternative '*teleological*'<sup>1</sup> reading of *Oedipus Rex*:

In this reading, Oedipus Rex is not a story of past deeds and desire, but a drama of evolving truth. The tragedy is not of posited desire, but of an unrelenting search. Despite Iocaste's warnings, Oedipus cannot help but try to cast light on the facts...Oedipus reaches forward; he moves towards self-consciousness, towards a position from which he can see himself. (Enckell 2007:66)

The 'teleological' reading, Enckell argues, captures the fact that bodily 'instincts' have become displaced by 'affects' as the central driving force in psychic life:

In Ricoeur's dialectical reading of Oedipus Rex, the archaeological reflection looked for the human subject in a regressive move to a temporal, functional and structural past. In the opposite reading, the drama was seen as a tragedy of evolving self-consciousness. Oedipus cannot help but reach for the truth lying in front of him: he strives for a position not yet attained... In the teleological reflection, the motive lies ahead at the perceptual end. What makes a person

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<sup>1</sup> 'Teleology' describes things in terms of the purpose, goal or directive they intend to serve.



move in a specific way is the affect, the feeling one strives for. For teleology, the motive is the affect. (Enckell 2007:70).

Enckell's argument is evocative of the 'relational turn' in psychoanalysis (see Blass & Carmelli 2010), in which psychoanalytic theory has moved away from Freud's portrayal of man as a primarily instinctive and pleasure driven being towards a view of man as a 'political animal' (Enckell 2007, Greenberg & Mitchell 1983). A great deal of psychoanalytic theory from the latter half of the twentieth century has either implicitly or explicitly been swept up in the 'relational turn' (Blass & Carmelli 2010), a movement which has been mirrored in the 1990s 'affective turn' in social theory (Clough & Halley 2007) and accompanied by an explosion of neuroscientific insights into the central role of affects in brain functioning (Cozolino 2010, Damasio 1999, Panksepp 2010, 2012).

While affects play an important role in the account of imagining proposed in this thesis, they are not its defining feature. Where affects are emphasised, this will be in the context of their relationship with *epistemic concerns*; features of psychic life which focus on knowledge and the experience of knowing (Morton 2009; De Sousa 2008). Although epistemic factors are quietly present in a broad range of psychoanalytic theories, their role is rarely highlighted and thematised. For example, Enckell's reading of *Oedipus Rex* delineates "the feeling one strives for" (Enckell 2007: 70) as the ultimate motivating force, with Enckell concluding that "for teleology, the motive is the affect" (ibid), failing to pick up on his own assertion that "Oedipus cannot help but cast light on the facts" (Enckell 2007: 66). Why not read Oedipus' journey as one in which the motive is a need to know? This is the view adopted by Jonathan Lear in his work *Open Minded* (1999), where he remarks:

What, after all, is Oedipus' Complex? That he killed his father and married his mother misses the point. Patricide and maternal incest are *consequences* of Oedipus' failure, not its source. Oedipus' fundamental mistake lies in his assumption that meaning is transparent to human reason (Lear 1999: 29, emphasis in the original)

Elsewhere, Lear expands this line of thinking, arguing that Oedipus' unwarranted confidence in his own capacity to master situations through transparent and definitive 'knowledge' results in his downfall. Lear takes Oedipus' boastful assurance to Tiresias that he unpicked the Sphinx's riddle "by native wit, not by what I learnt from birds" (Sophocles 303-98 quoted in Ray 1975:102) - that is to say, through clear and rational thinking, rather than superstitious divination - to be indicative that Oedipus is suffering from a striking and malignant lack of curiosity. His deficiency in open-mindedness, Lear suggests, is precisely what propels Oedipus towards the very fate he believed he had worked out how to avoid:

Oedipus is suffering a *reflexive breakdown*: he cannot give a coherent account of what he is doing. But he can't focus on the breakdown – and thus remains unconscious of it – because he is too busy thinking. He assumes he *already knows* what the problem is; the only issue is how to avoid it. What he misses completely is the thought that his "knowingness" lies at the heart of his troubles: what he doesn't know is that he doesn't know (Lear 1998: 46, emphasis in the original)

### **The 'Epistemic' Turn**

In this thesis, I will pick up on Lear's line of thought by proposing an 'epistemic turn' in psychoanalytic theory which is analogous to the 'relational turn' introduced above

(Blass & Carmelli 2010, see Chapter Four). Most importantly, I will propose that 'epistemic turn' promotes the imagination as a core feature of psychological health. According to this view, health can be described as a psychic stance in which imaginative engagement with reality leaves one open to 'learning from experience' (Bion 1962/1984). My argument will draw on the fact that the capacity for social learning has been linked with the ability to successfully regulate affect, which in turn is believed to underlie sound mental functioning (Fonagy et. al 2002; Fonagy & Luyten 2009; Hopkins 2016).

To further this view, I will demonstrate that an undervalued aspect of psychic life is the role played by epistemic emotions (Morton 2009) and motivations (De Sousa 2008) leading to a view in which the mind is largely driven by the need to predict, explore and understand (Clark 2016; Gopnik 1998). When psychic health is at its most robust, it is characterised by a capacity for learning from social contexts (Fonagy et. al. 2017a) and an ability to *make use* of what is novel in presenting situations (Crittenden & Landini 2011). It also entails that pleasure and pleasure-seeking take on a notably epistemological flavour, which has been captured by Jaak Panksepp as "enthused curiosity" (Panksepp 2012, see Chapter Four). On this view, knowledge is not a 'luxury' of the secondary process – an activity that the mind turns to only once it has reigned in its base pleasure seeking elements and focused its attention on the sophisticated contemplation of reality - but is built into the primitive foundations of mental activity from the bottom up (Clark 2016). Equally, I will show how psychopathology can be understood as a rupture in the subject's epistemological relationship with her environment (which can encompass both the internal and the external worlds), resulting in overly rigid explanatory frameworks (Crittenden & Landini 2011, Hopkins 2016) and failures in the capacity for learning

(Fonagy et. al 2015, 2017a, 2017b). An important part of this argument will be an analysis of the conspicuous lack of epistemological themes in Freud's writings (see Chapters One and Two), which I will argue can go some way towards explaining his portrayal of the imagination as a process which distracts and insulates the imaginer from the world (Freud 1900, 1907).

The current investigation will aim to provide a conceptual analysis rather than a history of ideas. In other words, it considers the *theoretical conditions* that create a demand for a form of 'reality oriented' imagining. Although there is a chronological element implicit in this – it considers, after all, psychoanalysis at its inception versus psychoanalysis in some of its most current formulations – what I will present is far from a linear tale of psychoanalytic theory transforming from one thing into another. Indeed, one of the reasons for beginning this project with an in-depth analysis of the Freudian theory is to appreciate the multitude of theoretical insights that can be gleaned from it which remain highly relevant today, (especially in light of current movements to, once again, grant psychoanalytic theory an empirical basis (see Fotopolou et. al ed. 2012)). At the same time, the argument that follows may prompt a more mindful consideration of use of the term 'imagination' in psychoanalytic theory. The explicit links I will draw later on (see Chapter Three) between Freud's notion of the imagination and his status as an instinct theorist (a theory of motivation which arguably lost popularity after the development of 'object relations' (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983) may caution against automatically adopting Freud's portrayal of the imagination in the future as it is precisely the abandonment of 'instinct theory' and the rise of other broad conceptualizations of the mind which encourages a new perspective on imaginative functioning (see Chapters Three and Four).

The current study will also aim to de-couple the imagination from its often exclusive connection with aesthetics and artistic creativity in psychoanalytic theory (Freud 1907, 1910; Segal 1991). Instead, I will aim for a more grounded construal of imaginative processes, in which the term aims to grasp a certain *quality of experience* that is available to all regardless of aesthetic ability (Lennon 2010, 2015; Winnicott 1971/2005). In this sense, it will follow Winnicott's definition of 'creativity', which he introduces with the comment: "I am hoping that the reader will accept a general reference to creativity, not letting the word get lost in the successful or acclaimed creation but keeping it to the meaning that refers to a colouring of the whole attitude to external reality" (Winnicott 1971/2005: 87). The same logic can be applied to the 'reality oriented' imagination.

It can be argued that there is a call for an enquiry like the one presented in this thesis as my notion of the 'reality oriented' imagination presents, at least on the surface, a drastic reversal of the classic Freudian conceptualization. Aside from the intrinsic interest in studying this conceptual shift, it can be seen as a symptom of a much deeper transformation in the implicit understanding of mind and psychopathology. My central aim is to propose a view of imaginative processes according to which they embody a healthy epistemic attitude towards both internal and external reality. According to this perspective, the 'imagination' is a consciously accessible process which contains several dimensions that grant it a *sui generis* nature: it is sensorial (embodied), contains an implicit recognition of the self-as - imager and instantiates an openness to 'learning from experience' (Bion 1964/1985).

### **Defining the 'Reality Oriented' Imagination:**

One of the core aims of this thesis is to unpack how the imagination has transformed from a primarily 'reality indifferent' process to a primarily 'reality oriented' process within psychoanalytic theory. This evolution occurs, I argue, in a manner that matches the changing conceptualisation of the imagination in philosophy; with the 'reality oriented' view that is expressed in the mentalization model cohering with the dominant account of imaginative activity in both contemporary neuroscience and phenomenological philosophy. But what is 'reality oriented' imagining? I will dedicate this section to giving a more in depth outline of reality oriented imagining and placing it within an intellectual context.

My strategy throughout this thesis will be to bring the concept of the 'reality oriented' imagination into its own by contrasting it with traditional assumptions about the imagination's psychological function and representational content. The traditional view, which will be the focus of the first two chapters of this work, asserts that the imagination is a form of mental activity which provides an experiential escape from reality. This approach, which persists in common-sense views of the imagination to this day, facilitates a connection between the imagination, fantasy, dreams and works of art or fiction (Sodre 2015). Freud can be seen to exploit this pre-existing connection through the creation of a metapsychological construct which he called 'the primary process (Freud 1895;1900;1915; 1923). Freud's 'primary process', which is characterised by highly visual, 'reality indifferent' thinking, is arguably a formalised version of the traditional notion of the imagination which he uses to account the phenomena listed above; namely dreams, daydreams and works of art or fiction (Freud 1901;1908).

Historically, the expansive period of intellectual history in which the traditional view of the imagination was predominant can be defined (rather simplistically) as the pre-Kantian era. Until the publication of Kant's "the Critique of Pure Reason" the imagination was generally considered an unsophisticated and inherently deceptive force in virtue of the fact that it was presumed to be distinct from perception. Rather than provide a necessary aid to perception, the imagination was considered a force that clouded the otherwise straightforward access that the perceiving individual has to external reality. In Chapter Two, I will briefly outline how this general account of the imagination is present in works of philosophy from Plato and Aristotle through to the early modern works of Descartes and Hume and is a view which is supported in Freud's own accounts of perception. Kant revolutionized the philosophy of the imagination, being the first thinker to systematically outline how imagination is not only present within perception but necessary for perception to function successfully, and therefore marks a highly important turning point in philosophical conceptualizations of the imagination. Kant therefore can be seen as providing an initial blue-print for 'reality oriented' imagining.

Kant's arguments are highly complex and the relevant aspects will be covered in more depth later in this work (see, in particular, Chapter Two), although it is worth giving a sense of his general position here. Kant believed that two aspects of human experience that need to be reconciled are the capacity to be affected by sensory experiences and the capacity to make active judgements about these experiences. The former, which he call sensibility, involves the ability to take in the concrete 'givens' which are presented as sense data. The latter, which he termed understanding is the ability to think about what one is seeing and to make

judgements about the world of the basis of it. One of the simplest ways in which these two forces work together is in concept recognition: one needs sensibility in order to see a particular triangle and understanding to judge that one is seeing a triangle which is the same as other instantiations of triangles that the perceiver has experienced previously. Kant recognised that there is an inherent problem in the compatibility between sensibility and understanding: they are two distinct modes of experiencing that rely on different representational formats, so how can they come together to produce perceptual experiences? In the 'schematism' Kant argues that sensibility alone is not sufficient to grant the human mind with the capacity for sensory experiences, as it cannot explain the fact that perceptual experience presents itself as a unified whole (Kant's thinking on this point is unpacked in more detail in Chapter Two). When we perceive a scene we do not experience a multitude of sensory signals barraging the mind in a confused and disjointed competition for our attention but rather see one scene situated reliably within time and space. Kant introduces the imagination as a mediating force which shares enough similarities with both sensibility and understanding to forge a compatibility between them (Clark 2015; Kitcher 1990). He argues that the imagination is an active and spontaneous mental capacity which transforms sensory 'information' into an image which can be thought about<sup>2</sup>(Kant 1781/1900/2007).

For the purposes of the current argument, Kant's theory of the imagination is important in so far as it portrays the imagination as a 'reality oriented' process both

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<sup>2</sup> Much like his traditionally minded philosophical predecessors, Kant therefore saw the imagination as a mediating force between two distinct aspects of being. Yet where philosophers such as Descartes granted the imagination the functioning of mediating between the bodily and the mental (see Chapter Two), Kant saw the imagination as a necessary in mediating between perception and conceptual thought; between sensibility and understanding.



of the level of its psychological function and its representational content. The ‘raw material’ of the Kantian imagination is representations of the external environment, rather than internally generated flights of fancy. Furthermore, the Kantian imagination functions to enable the individual to experience the external world, rather than acting as a distracting interference to external reality. According to the Kantian paradigm, then, the imagination is a highly sophisticated mental process in so far as it is what allows humans to go ‘beyond the data of experience’ (Swanson 2016). As we shall see in the first two chapters of this work, this differs from Freud’s more traditional position in which he portrays the imagination as an unsophisticated and primitive mental force that is aligned with pathological mental states.

. It is more specifically within contemporary neuroscientific accounts of perception which stem from Kantian insights that my concept of ‘reality oriented’ imagining is grounded (e.g. Clark 2015). Advances in our understanding of the mechanisms which underlie perception have shown that even sensory experiences such as visual perception are ‘cognitively penetrated’ (subject to influence and distortion by higher-order brain mechanisms) (see Raftopolous, 2009). This gives perception an ‘active’ rather than a ‘passive’ nature in a manner that can be seen as a direct theoretical descendent of Kant’s account of perceptual experience (see Swanson 2016 for an extended discussion of this). Throughout this thesis I will adopt the current dominant hypothesis that perceptual consciousness is the result of the brain generating a predictive model of its environment. Adopting this view of perception, referred to as the “Bayesian Brain” or, more generally “Predictive Processing”, has several knock-on effects which rather dramatically alter Freud’s theory of the imagination as a psychological process governed by the pleasure principle. A simple example of predictive perceptual consciousness, and one that I

shall return to later in the thesis (see Chapter 4) is the ‘Face-House Experiment’ In this experiment, a picture of a house is projected onto a participant’s right eye and a picture of a face is projected onto their left eye, with the result that they have the phenomenological impression of a face gradually turning into a house, and then gradually back into a face again. This occurs because the brain “knows”, from experience, that there is no such thing as a “face-house”, so it uses the visual data available in the right eye to conclude that it is looking at a face and suppresses the contradictory data coming in from the left eye. This succeeds momentarily, but there is so much contradictory data (it makes up half of the visual field) that the brain is forced to change its hypothesis, and concludes that it is seeing a house. The cycle repeats, creating the undulating image for the participant. In more technical terms, undulating image embodies a tension between the brain’s ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ mechanisms. ‘Top down’ mechanisms act to inhibit any incoming sensory data which contradicts the brain’s dominant hypothesis, whereas ‘bottom-up’ mechanisms flag up errors in ‘top-down’ hypothesis (they draw attention to anomalies) with the hope of updating these predictions so that they more accurately represent the entire range of incoming data (Hopkins 2012:11, 2016:4)). The undulating image occurs as a result of perceptual system attempting to manoeuvre the contradictory incoming data as well as it can in an attempt to reduce the chance that it will be ‘surprised’ by the environment.

Outside of experimental conditions, the brain is constantly creating its own perceptual experience in much the same manner by aiming for a predictive model of sensory input that accounts for as much of the incoming sensory ‘barrage’ as it can (Clark 2015;Swanson 2016). This, I will argue throughout this thesis, has a couple of effects that are pertinent to a (neuro) psychoanalytic account of mental health and

pathology. Firstly, as above, it means that what we experience on a phenomenological level is centred on what is novel or surprising in a perceptual scene: the incoming data that does not fit smoothly into the predicted model (Hopkins 2015). This insight can be usefully integrated into work on mental health from an attachment perspective, which suggests that health is partly defined by an individual's capacity to recognise and use the novel aspects of experience (see Chapters 5-8; Crittenden & Landini 2011). Psychopathology, in contrast, tends to be characterised by overly rigid predictive schemas that have diminished capacity to pick up on the nuances and subtleties of interpersonal scenarios (Crittenden & Landini 2011).

It is therefore via the predictive processing model that Kant's concept of the productive imagination is most intimately related to 'reality oriented' imagining for the purpose of the argument presented here. Yet while there are clear structural parallels between Kant's model of the mind and the contemporary accounts of predictive perception, one difference sets them aside which arguably draws the neuroscientific model in to a psychoanalytic sphere: the role played by dreams and 'fictive' daytime experiences (Hopkins 2016).

As I shall explore in Chapter Five, for predictive consciousness to work optimally 'realistic' perception must work in concert with night time dreaming in a 24 – hour regulating cycle. The fictive conscious experiences of night time dreams allow for the brain to process daytime perceptual learning and consolidate new information into an overarching 'model' of reality (Hopkins 2016). One of the most important aspects of this process from a psychoanalytic standpoint is the impact of dreaming in emotional learning (Walker & Van der Helm 2009). Dreams, it has been argued, are an essential aspect of learning from emotional situations in a manner that removes the

‘sting’ from highly affective memories. While this presents a different picture to the traditional Freudian theory that dreams provide a form of experience wish-fulfilment for unconscious phantasies, we shall see how it preserves his general notion that mental disorder is an instance of dream processes operating in waking conscious life (Hopkins 2016). The most extreme example of this is the active hallucinations and delusions that form the positive symptoms of psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia. Freud believed that these symptoms could be explained as the abduction of ‘normal’ rational conscious thought by the primitive and reality indifferent primary processes, thus making the psychotic individual essentially a “waking dreamer” (Hopkins 2016). The contemporary predictive model posits the same broad explanation for active delusions and hallucinations, arguing that the ‘complexity reducing’ mechanisms in sleep (those which allow perceptual data to be consolidated into a working model of reality) ‘take over’ waking predictive consciousness. This, as I shall discuss in Chapter Five, leads to robust relationship between disordered sleep and psychopathology.

Despite this thematic similarity, the difference between the Freudian and the contemporary conception is in the role they grant dream processes vis-à-vis an individual’s openness to ‘reality’. While there is no doubt that both approaches view dreams as containing ‘fictive’, ‘reality indifferent’ representational content, the contemporary approach nevertheless assigns dreams the function of enabling the individual to form a greater connection with reality overall. Dreams play a vital role in allowing a ‘realistic’ and ‘accurate’ perceptual model to be maintained during waking hours. The Freudian perspective, in contrast, does not see dreams as facilitating an individual’s openness to reality: although he considered dreaming as one of the most healthy and ‘normal’ ways in which the primitive and instinctual parts of the mind can

find expression, he did not credit dreams with enabling the individual to form a deeper connection with reality.

Insights into the psychological function and content of dreaming can be used to create a theoretical model of the conscious imagination. Conscious, day time imagining is seen in both the Freudian and the contemporary neuropsychanalytic literature as an instance of dream mechanisms operative in waking life (Freud 1908' Hopkins 2016). Unlike psychopathological delusions, however, the imagining individual implicitly recognises the difference between imagined and veridical experiences, and can even exert agency over this process (Freud 1908; McGinn 2004).

The difference between the Freudian and contemporary approaches to the imagination mirrors that of nocturnal dreaming: Freud construes the conscious imagination as an instance of 'reality indifferent' processes taking over typically 'reality oriented' conscious thought, whereas the contemporary 'predictive' model can be used to support an account of the imagination as facilitating an individual's capacity to be open to reality. As there is not currently a fully formulated model of the imagination in the 'predictive processing' literature, this thesis will aim to suggest a potential framework for imagination and outline how this can be applied specifically to mental health and psychopathology. Using insights from the neuropsychanalytic and 'predictive processing' literature, I will advance the idea that veridical perception functions most effectively when it is augmented with complexity reducing 'counterfactual' reasoning; namely, when it is infused with imagination. This can be used to explain why the capacity for imaginative 'mentalizing' has been identified as a cornerstone of robust mental health as well as accounting for the psychological function of cultural phenomena such as art and literature. Within mentalizing the

need for imagination is arguably the most pronounced, as effective mentalizing involves going beyond manifest physical and behavioural features in order to envisage mental states which are inherently unobservable (see Chapter X for a fuller exploration of the role of imagining in mentalizing).

The model of the imagination which emerges from the neuropsychanalytic and ‘mentalization’ literature can be seen to have several important thematic similarities with the account presented in phenomenological philosophy. In contrast with the traditional accounts of the imagination, which fit smoothly with Freud’s employment of the concept, the phenomenological approach highlights how the imagination allows the individual to focus the external environment and the opportunities that it presents (Lennon 2015). This has been captured by thinkers such as Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, who both present the imagination as a process which opens reality out to an individual by infusing perceptual scenes with the recognition of absent or invisible features and highlighting possibilities for action (see Chapter Seven). Merleau-Ponty in particular captures this characteristic of perception using the metaphor of ‘pregnancy’ to describe how a perceptual scene is experienced as being more than the sum of its sensory parts: the perceiver also experiences the ‘hidden’ or ‘invisible’ aspects of the scene, such as occluded surfaces of objects (Merleau-Ponty 1968). The fact that these ‘absent’ or ‘invisible’ features cannot be removed from a scene-as-experienced, he argues, entails that no clean distinction between perception and imagination can be drawn (Merleau-Ponty 1968).

Phenomenological approaches to the imagination are useful for the ‘reality oriented’ imagination as they sit squarely within the post-Kantian philosophical tradition, therefore allowing for the imagination to be framed as a necessary part of rational and affective engagement with the world. More specifically, the emphasis in

the phenomenological literature on the imagination yielding up possibilities for future action can be seen complement the important aspects of the ‘predictive processing’ model. Much like the phenomenologists, and unlike the analytic philosophical tradition which has largely dominated western philosophical discourse, ‘predictive processing’ acknowledges that human experience of the world is shaped according to the need for pragmatic and bodily action (Clark 2015). It therefore upholds the general phenomenological principle that humans do not encounter world as detached, passive observers but as agents primed for bodily movement and social engagement (see Chapter Seven for an extended discussion of these themes).

The ‘reality oriented’ imagination is therefore a broad theory of perceptual sensitivity and engagement which is rooted with a Kantian metaphysical heritage. For the purpose of this thesis, I will focus on how ‘reality oriented’ imagining is leveraged in our interpersonal understanding of other minds through the concept of ‘mentalizing’, as this is the most relevant for a psychoanalytic approach to mental health and psychopathology. It is possible, however, that the account presented here up could open new avenues for research in other aspects of ‘reality oriented’ imagining.

### **The ‘Reality Oriented’ Imagination and Psychic Health**

I claim no originality in proposing that the imagination can be a healthy psychological process which facilitates a more nuanced and sophisticated engagement with the world (Kind & Kung ed. 2016; Lennon 2010, 2015). On the contrary, one of the primary aims of this thesis is to demonstrate that many psychoanalytic models – from more traditional approaches such those put forward by Winnicott (1971/2005) to contemporary empirical accounts like the mentalization model developed by Fonagy

and colleagues (Fonagy et. al. 2002, see below) – already adopt a form of ‘reality oriented’ imagining as their basis for understanding psychic health. This is in stark contrast to Freud’s approach, in which he portrays the imagination as a half-way house to psychopathology (Freud 1907, 1915a, see Chapter One).

One potential explanation for the stark difference between Freudian and contemporary ‘reality oriented’ views of the imagination appeals to their differing approaches to *psychic health*. Freud defined health as the *absence of psychopathology*, adopting a view on which one is healthy so long as one is not *actively* symptomatic<sup>3</sup> (Breuer & Freud 1895). On this view, as we shall see, there is little scope for imaginative functioning to positively *contribute* to a healthy mind-set as there is simply no call for anything *to be contributed* at all (see Chapters One and Two). I will argue that as a result of this Freud tends to portray the imagination as the excessive pull of internal, unconscious forces on healthy conscious processing; as a force that works *against* health and should therefore be overcome (Breuer & Freud 1895; Freud 1907).

In diametric opposition, Peter Fonagy and colleagues have developed a model of infantile development, psychopathology and psychotherapeutic treatment – the ‘mentalization’ model - which takes the capacity to imaginatively engage with the unobservable psychological states of self and other as the *defining feature* of health. This capacity, which they have termed ‘mentalizing’ or ‘reflective functioning’ is

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<sup>3</sup> Underpinning this view, I will suggest, was Freud’s tendency to take certain features of experience for granted. ‘Secondary process’ abilities such as the coming to know the external environment through perception, or to adopt language as a medium of thought are presented by Freud as *given*: so long as they are not actively interfered with by unconscious processes, these psychological abilities are assumed to be intact and functioning. As we shall see, contemporary perspectives work against this assumption and emphasise that many core aspects of psychological functioning are developmental achievements (e.g. Fonagy et. al. 2002; Crittenden & Landini 2011).



summarized as an “imaginative mental activity, namely, perceiving and interpreting human behavior in terms of intentional mental states (e.g., needs, desires, feelings, beliefs, goals, and reasons)” (Fonagy et. al 2007: 228). From a mentalization standpoint, as we shall see at some length, health requires the *active presence* of an imaginative mentalizing stance.

The revolutionary idea that health requires more than the absence of psychopathology was introduced into psychoanalytic thinking long before the development of empirical approaches (such as the mentalization model) through the works of Donald Winnicott (1971/2005). In “the Location of Cultural Experience”, for example, Winnicott describes his dissatisfaction with the psychoanalytic *status quo* as follows:

Starting as we do from psychoneurotic illness and with ego defences related to the anxiety that arises out of instinctual life, we tend to think of health in terms of the state of ego defences. We say it is healthy when these defences are not too rigid, etc. But we seldom reach the point at which we can start to describe what life is like apart from illness or absence of illness. That is to say, we have yet to tackle the question of *what life itself is about* (Winnicott 1971/2005: 133, emphasis in the original).

On Winnicott’s view, psychic health is not simply the lack of illness, but the active presence of *something more*. It is this *something more* which I will argue can be captured through my construct of ‘reality oriented’ imagining. While the highly normative question of “what life itself is about” (ibid) lies far beyond the scope of this thesis, I will draw attention to a variety of ways in which Winnicott’s insight is supported by empirically oriented models of development and psychopathology,

notably attachment theory, neuropsychanalysis and Fonagy's 'mentalization' model (see below Bowlby 1997; Fotopolu ed. 2012; Fonagy et. al 2002), all of which portray healthy conscious life as an dynamic, exploratory force that can be set against Freud's rather static portrayal of the 'secondary process' (Freud 1915a).

### **Imagination and the Strategic Mind**

According to the perspective presented here, the most interesting aspect of the 'reality oriented' imagination for psychoanalysis is not its potential for success as a route to knowledge (a question more suited to philosophical epistemology. (See Kind & Kung 2016) but what it shows about the motivational forces which drive both health and psychopathology. In what follows, I hope to show that the 'epistemic turn' - which allows us to see the imagination as constitutive of psychic health – also paints a picture of the internal world as primarily *strategic* (concerned with understanding, knowledge and prediction (Bowlby 1997; Clark 2016)) rather than *compensatory* (Freud 1895, 1900, 1911). This, I will suggest, stems from the *epistemologically vulnerable* position that the subject finds herself in (McDowell 1996). From a developmental perspective, for instance, attachment research has shown that even pre-verbal, primitive mental processes are designed to explain and predict social experiences (Bowlby 1997; Fonagy et. al 2002; Freud 1895). This deep-seated need to predict can be mitigated by a *predictable* early interpersonal environment: babies who experience their caregivers as emotionally available are able to prioritize exploration and seek out opportunities for learning, whereas those who do not trust that their caregivers will be responsive tend to prioritize prediction in order to keep themselves safe (Bowlby 1997; Crittenden & Landini 2011; Fonagy et. al. 2002; Hopkins 2016).

Drawing on these insights, I will propose an epistemic reading of the imagination in which it exemplifies the kind of open-minded curiosity that can develop in 'good enough' early circumstances (Winnicott 1971/2005). My view will suggest that it is individuals who have basic level of *trust* in their social environments who are most open to learning from them. I hope to emphasise that trust – a concept which I will explore primarily through the mentalization model's notion of 'epistemic trust' (see below, Fonagy et. al. 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b) – plays an essential role in allowing the individual to feel safe enough to access the world on an imaginative level. More specifically, it enables the individual to co-opt imaginative processes in order to access an affective and experiential dimension of experience that is not given in straightforward veridical perception. Following the mentalization model, I will argue that this imaginative dimension is centred on the unobservable minds of others and rooted in a phenomenological experience of self and agency (Fonagy et. al. 2002; Fonagy & Luyten 2009; Lennon 2015).

The framework I will adopt also leaves room for a more traditional understanding of the imagination; one that construes it as fantastical, fictive and indifferent to reality. Following the work of Jim Hopkins (2016) on the links between dreaming and mental disorder, I will argue that even fantastical experiences can be seen to contain an epistemic dimension. This view, which I will discuss at some length in Chapter Five, presents 'fictive' experiences as pseudo-explanatory: rather than ameliorating psychic disturbances by providing a false experience of instinctual gratification (Freud 1895, 1911), Hopkins argues that they may generate false explanatory hypotheses (Hopkins 2016). Thus conceived, both the reality 'indifferent' and the 'reality oriented' forms of the imagination are a far cry from the concept of the imagination deployed by Freud in classic psychoanalysis (Freud 1907). In order to

differentiate between these three alternate forms of understanding imaginative processes, I will adopt the following terminology throughout:

**The Freudian Imagination:** The account of the imagination that stems from Freudian theory. In the first section of this thesis I will argue that this view defines the imagination as a sensorial (mostly visual) process which is inherently indifferent to reality and driven by an 'affective logic' (Lennon 2015).

**The 'Reality Oriented' Imagination:** A view of the imagination as inherently geared towards knowledge and exploration, particularly of a psychological and social nature, exemplifying an attitude in which one is open to 'learning from experience'. It also contains a sensorial dimension, though in a markedly different manner to the Freudian imagination as it is concerned with embodied perceptual experiences.

**The 'Reality Indifferent' Imagination:** While this account of imaginative activity shares many similarities with the Freudian account, being defined by its indifference to reality and forming central features of dreaming and psychopathology, it differs markedly from the Freudian conception in being a response to epistemic anxieties rather than instinctual tension. In place of soothing unmet bodily needs, it provides pseudo-explanations in the absence of 'reality oriented' ones (Hopkins 2016).

### **Defining the Imagination**

As these three variations on the term 'imagination' demonstrate, it is a difficult concept to pin down (McGinn 2004; Kind ed. 2016). Arguably, the three highly distinct processes outlined above can only be brought under the umbrella concept of the 'imagination' because the term has such a broad scope. In an influential paper

for the British Journal of Aesthetics, for instance, Leslie Stevenson has sketched out twelve most common uses of the term in academic discourse, showing that it can range in meaning from the incredibly general definition of “the ability to think of (conceive of, or represent) anything at all” (Stevenson 2003:1) to the far more specific “the capacity to produce works of art that express something deep about the meaning of life” (Stevenson 2003:1).

Recognizing the seemingly unbounded nature of the term ‘imagination’ highlights a major potential objection to the current project: if the Freudian and the mentalizing conceptions of the imagination are so wildly different, could this not simply represent a linguistic quirk? As Stevenson’s paper demonstrates, the imagination is a term capable of being applied to such a wide range of mental activities that when two highly diverse definitions arise this does not necessarily point to anything of significance. There are likely a whole range of processes co-occurring in the mind (or brain) which can all reasonably be referred to as imaginative under our current conceptual-linguistic categories, but this may reflect more about our failure to apply rigorous descriptive terms to mental processes rather than to comment on the mental processes themselves. As a result, attempts to uncover what an ‘imaginative’ process ‘really is’ are misguided.

The argument that I will present over the course of this thesis takes this into account. In highlighting how we have an increasing need within psychoanalytic theory to appreciate the imaginative nature of healthy, conscious thinking I will make no attempt to define the imagination as *solely* a ‘reality oriented’ process, nor to claim that it’s ‘reality oriented’ forms are more worthy of being described as imaginative than, for example, acts of fantasy or daydreaming. As evidenced by the definitions above, the Freudian Imagination, the ‘reality oriented Imagination’ and the

'reality indifferent' imagination are recognised in this study as different mental processes. For the sake of the current argument, it is interesting to consider why psychoanalytic theories would draw on a particular account of the imagination at a particular time or within a particular theoretical context. Assessing why different psychoanalytic models appeal to different definitions of the imagination at different times can arguably shed light on the underlying theoretical assumptions that the models embody (Hardy 2016).

The breadth of the term imagination has led to widespread debate regarding its nature and function (Kind 2001, 2016; Lennon 2015; McGinn 2004). Although a full discussion of the various philosophical issues at stake regarding the imagination is beyond the scope of this thesis (see Kind ed. 2016, Kind & Kung ed. 2016) – and some, such as the relationship between imagination and perception will be covered in the course of the argument that follows – there is one which it will be necessary to deal with before continuing: the relationship between the imagination and mental imagery. This issue will be highly important for my discussion of the Freudian imagination, as Freud operated on the assumption that the imagination is a primarily imagistic mental process (Freud 1907, 1923 also see Varendonck 1921). In adopting this position, he was (unsurprisingly) more in keeping with his own time than with current thinking on the subject. For the majority of its theoretical history, the imagination has been treated as a visual phenomenon as a matter of course (Kind 2016). Yet in the latter half of the twentieth century imagistic accounts of the imagination began to fall rapidly out of favour, potentially incited by the behaviourist school's rejection of mental imagery as a leftover 'myth' from the outdated philosophy of Rene Descartes (see Chapter Two for more on Descartes) (Kind 2001). Despite the subsequent decline of behaviourist approaches themselves, the

fact that mental images are generally difficult to accommodate into a scientific (or 'naturalized') account of the mind has led visual accounts of the imagination to remain unpopular over the last 50 years during the rapid growth of cognitive science and the neurosciences (Kind 2001). The alternative, cognitively-oriented view of imaginative processes has been bolstered through the recognition in philosophy that any definition of the imagination as necessarily imagistic runs into conceptual problems due to the fact that it is clearly possible to imagine certain scenarios without recourse to mental imagery. In her paper "Putting the Image back in Imagination" (2001), Amy Kind gives the example of imagining that Bill Clinton has a secret desire to be a rock star: although this state of mind may be accompanied by a mental image (or mental images) of Bill Clinton, these do not seem to be an essential feature of holding this imaginative attitude (Kind 2001).

Kind, as the title of her paper suggests, nevertheless goes on to defend the idea that we can conceptualise the imagination as an inherently visual process. Although a contemporary philosopher who is not psychoanalytically oriented, it is worth noting her claim that mental imagery, in having a similar 'phenomenology' to perception, makes it a form of representation with a sensory dimension that 'thinking' lacks (ibid). Kind's analysis is useful in the first instance because it presents a clear means of conceptually distinguishing the imagination from other forms of psychic activity: the imagination has a built in experiential element; other mental processes do not. Moreover, her proposal that the imagistic representation imbues the imagination with a necessary 'experiential underside' (Kind 2001: 97) not shared by acts of 'thinking' (including those which deal in fictive scenarios, such as supposing, pretending or conceiving) that can be helpfully applied to Freud's own presentation of the mental

image, which also uses the sensory nature of the imagination in the understanding of its role in psychopathology.

The notion of an ‘experiential underside’ will be an important substratum in all three forms of the imagination that I have discussed, as it is what marks them out as forms of imagination rather than varieties of ‘thinking’. Within Freud, as we shall see in the following chapter, this ‘experiential underside’ is specifically drawn from imagistic forms of representation (Freud 1923). While the ‘reality oriented’ imagination also has a sensorial and visual aspect, this does not take the form of ‘pictures in the head’ but is rather a particular character of embodied perceptual experience (see Lennon 2015, Chapter Seven). In both cases, however, I will adopt Kind’s general principle that an act of imagination must have an ‘experiential underside’; an embodied and felt dimension and will not include ‘attitudinal’ or ‘propositional’ imaginings within the definition of ‘imagining’ for the purposes of the argument to follow.

### **Psychoanalysis, Philosophy, Science**

In discussing the nature and function of the imagination, I will draw from relevant philosophical works on the subject (for example Clark 2016; Lennon 2015; Kant 1871/1900/2007). Despite the fact that philosophy and psychoanalysis have different overarching concerns and methodologies, there are several ways in which philosophy is not only useful but necessary for the task at hand (for a general review of the relationship between Freud and philosophy see Livingstone-Smith 1999). I will utilize philosophical insights in contextualising my readings of both the Freudian imagination and the ‘reality oriented’ imagination (e.g. Lennon 2015; Sartre 1936/2012), in assessing the impact of naturalization on psychoanalytic theory (e.g.



Collin 2011) and in providing a blueprint for the subject's epistemological relationship to reality (e.g. McDowell 1996).

The key aim of this thesis is to assess the nature and function of the imagination on a *conceptual level*. I will not provide new empirical data on imaginative processes but look to understand the changing nature of the imagination as a theoretical construct. In this respect, philosophical works can provide vital insights for a conceptual analysis and draw out how theories of mental representation are linked to a broader philosophy of mind (Cavell 1993). I will argue that the difference between the Freudian imagination and the 'reality oriented imagination' mirrors the differences between traditional philosophical views of the imagination (e.g. Descartes 1641/1924) in which it is seen as mid-point between the body and the mind and phenomenological views of the imagination (e.g. Merleau-Ponty 1968) which present it as a medium through which the subject can engage with the external world (Lennon 2015) (see Chapters Two and Seven respectively).

Secondly, philosophical works can provide an intellectual arena in which the relationship between empirical and non-empirical approaches to mental functioning can be discussed (Collin 2011). As evidenced by the discussion so far, the majority of the psychoanalytic models which provide the context for my notion of the 'reality oriented' imagination (the mentalization model and neuropsychanalysis) are defined by their commitment to an *empirical knowledge base*. While settling issues concerning psychoanalysis' status as an empirical science is far beyond the scope of this thesis, a degree of philosophical insight into the issues raised by this will be necessary for the task at hand. Firstly, it is in the shift towards an empirical approach that many of the core features of 'reality oriented' imagining come to light, such as the important role played by predictive mechanisms in the 'Bayesian Brain' (Friston

2012| Hopkins 2012). Furthermore, philosophical insights will be useful in ascertaining how advances in perceptual neuroscience have changed the epistemological relationship between the subject and the external world (McDowell 1996).

The final way in which philosophy is important is through its capacity to provide a *normative commentary* on the issues discussed (Graham 2013). One of the main points that I will aim to draw out about the imagination is how it has transformed from a quasi-pathologised process to one which is celebrated as a foundational aspect of good psychological health (Fonagy et. al. 2007; Freud 1907). Although this entails a change of the imagination's conceptual constitution, it also reflects a change in *values* (Graham 2013). Within psychoanalytic theory, 'consciousness' has become a privileged term because it is inherently linked with health and adaptation to reality (see above). For instance, Freud always recognised that consciousness when understood as *awareness* contains sensory and affective elements (Freud 1923: 20), he simply decided that these forms of mental processes should not be described as 'conscious' for the purposes of his theory (Freud 1917: 232), therefore reflecting Freud's values rather than his understanding of mental processes. I will argue that an account of psychic health which emphasises imaginative processes also informative because of what it tells us about shifting *values* within psychoanalytic theory (Rayner 1991).

In order to tackle the task at hand, I will proceed as follows:

**Chapter One** will focus exclusively on drawing out Freud's theory of the imagination from a range of his pre-psychoanalytic and metapsychological texts. I will advance the reading that the imagination is viewed as quasi-pathological in

virtue of its sensorial (rather than linguistic) nature and the fact that it is incapable of representing rational links between ideas. As part of my argument I will aim to draw out important connections between imagination, the unconscious primary process and the pleasure principle.

**Chapter Two** will aim to elucidate Freud's theory of the imagination by reading in the context of philosophical debates regarding the relationship between both imagination and perception and imagination and thought. I will outline a selection of prominent philosophical accounts that portray imaginative processes as being a 'lower' form of mental activity which is inherently deceptive and cannot be a means of accessing truth and knowledge and suggest that these are conceptually resonant with Freud's theory of the imagination.

**Chapter Three** will consider how developments in psychoanalysis since Freud's time have set the scene for an epistemic, 'reality oriented' account of the imagination to emerge. By tracing a conceptual path from Freudian psychoanalysis to attachment theory via the work of Klein, Bion, Fairbairn and Winnicott, I will demonstrate how psychoanalysis has become increasingly aware of the importance of interpersonal relationships and real external circumstances. This theoretical sea-change opens up room for the imagination to be construed as a process which *connects* the individual with a reality outside the self, rather than a means through which internal processes gain a representational status. I will argue that this shift can be captured by comparing Freud's notion of the 'drive' as a 'frontier' phenomenon that genuinely lies between the body and the mind with Winnicott's notion of 'transitional phenomena' that genuinely lies between the internal and the external worlds.

**Chapter Four** will consider how developments in empirical accounts of mental functioning can be seen to engender an ‘epistemic turn’ in psychoanalysis. I will focus on three transformations that introduce epistemic factors more explicitly into psychoanalytic theory: the shift in emphasis from rational thought to prediction, from drives to affects and from unconscious phantasies to unconscious schemas or internal working models. I will then assess how these changes result in more nuanced and complex epistemological relationship between the individual and the environment.

**Chapter Five** will focus on the role of social and emotional *learning* in dreams and waking life. Once again drawing on insights from Winnicottian theory sketched in his paper “Dreaming, Fantasying and Living” (Winnicott 1971/2005: 35-50). I will demonstrate how both dreams and ‘reality oriented’ imagination can contribute to emotional learning in a way that promotes psychic health, while ‘fictive’ or ‘reality indifferent’ experiences in waking life represent a two-fold epistemological failure by simultaneously being evidence that the neural processes underlying emotional learning have failed and block further learning by shutting down the ‘reality oriented’ imagination.

**Chapter Six** will provide a developmental basis for my account of ‘reality oriented’ imagining by grounding it in attachment theory and a mentalizing account of development. This will also allow for a demonstration of how ‘good enough’ developmental circumstances create a conceptual link between self and agency, which I will later demonstrate provides an important contextual feature for a sound imaginative relationship towards the world and provide an account of. I will also give an account of how adverse developmental situations may

develop a tendency to rely on ‘fictive’ explanations which preclude opportunities for emotional learning.

**Chapter Seven** will offer a re-conceptualisation of the imagination based upon the advances discussed in earlier chapters. Using phenomenological accounts of the imagination as a theoretical framework, I will argue that the ‘reality oriented’ imagination embodies an epistemic attitude that can be compared to Merleau-Ponty’s account of ‘perceptual faith’ and John Keats’ notion of ‘negative capability’. An affectively grounded sense of self and agency, I will argue, is necessary to stabilise simple uncertainty into an attitude of ‘negative capability’.

**Chapter Eight** will conclude my argument by revisiting the relationship between imagination and language. Freud assigned language the function of connecting to reality and the visual imagination the function of insulating the individual from it, a set-up which is drastically challenged by the very notion of ‘reality oriented’ imagining. In this chapter I will argue that, while the ‘reality oriented’ imagination cannot itself be defined simply as language, in adult life it is able to co-opt language in its service. I will challenge the Freudian view that psychological health involves reconnecting a particular idea with the words that describe it and suggest instead that health involves the establishment of an imaginative relationship towards language and communication as a global phenomenon.



## **Introduction Part Two: Freud and the Mentalization Model**

I have opted primarily to centre my theory of the ‘reality oriented’ imagination on the mentalization model, as it is arguably the psychoanalytic model which most explicitly calls for the necessary use of the imagination in a sound and adaptive relationship to reality (Bateman & Fonagy 2010). It also has the benefit of offering a detailed developmental account of how the capacity for ‘reality oriented’ imagination unfolds in normal development, outlining how this can be affected by an adverse interpersonal environment. Another aim of this thesis, however, will be to highlight the implicit presence of the ‘reality oriented’ in schools of psychoanalytic thought other than the mentalization model, most notably those of Donald Winnicott (1971/2005). Additionally, I will aim to suggest some interdisciplinary links that can be drawn between the psychoanalytic ‘reality oriented’ imagination and contemporary philosophical writings on the imagination (e.g. Gallagher & Zahavi 2008, Lennon 2015). As the mentalization model is an empirically rooted model that frequently draws on disciplines such as cognitive psychology (Fonagy et. al. 2002) drawing out conceptual links between the presentation of the imagination in the mentalization literature and other psychoanalytic and philosophical theories may allow us to capture the ‘reality oriented’ imagination with greater depth and texture. Nevertheless, it will be useful to begin by offering a sound introduction to a mentalizing approach and to consider some of the factors which make a comparison between this model and traditional Freudian theory useful and interesting. This is especially pertinent in light of the fact that the two models are rarely discussed together within the psychoanalytic literature.

## Introducing the Mentalization Model

Mentalization is simultaneously a model of psychopathology, an account of psychological development and a method of psychotherapeutic treatment. Its basic principle is simple but compelling: psychopathology originates from a failure in an ability to ‘mentalize’, or, interpret both self and other in terms of underlying psychological states (Bateman & Fonagy 2010). Although often focused on the individual’s own thoughts and feelings, mentalization differs from straightforward introspection in that its goal is not knowledge of the mind per se but the regulation of affect and behaviour that this generates. It is a profoundly interpersonal process that must be both developed and employed within social interactions (ibid).

The mentalization model does not lay down a *specific thought process* but rather aims to capture a style of psychological attitude towards self and other. It operates across multiple dimensions (Fonagy & Luyten 2009, Liljenfors & Lundh 2015:37) and therefore draws on more than one ‘version’ of the imagination, ranging from purely cognitive ‘attitudinal’ imaginings implicit in cognitive (or ‘explicit’ dimensions) of mentalizing to affectively driven (or ‘implicit’) forms of mentalizing (Fonagy & Luyten 2009: 4). Nevertheless, all dimensions of imaginative mentalizing are geared towards the outside world in an attempt to glean knowledge and understanding from the interpersonal environment and thus provide a sound basis for a discussion of the ‘reality oriented’ imagination.

Before continuing, some clarifications are in order. Despite their initial similarity, ‘mentalizing’ differs substantially from the broader concept of ‘theory of mind’ commonly found in developmental psychology (Baron-Cohen 1995, Fonagy et. al. 2002:26-29). ‘Theory of mind’ refers to the comparatively straightforward ability to interpret other people’s actions as motivated by psychological intentions; a cognitive



capacity which is believed to develop in all children around the age of four (Gopnik 2009). While making a ‘theory of mind’ interpretation captures a mentalizing stance to some extent, the latter also focuses on the individual’s *subjective response* to their ‘theory of mind’ interpretations: successful mentalizing does not take interpretation of other minds as an *end in itself*, but rather uses this understanding in the aid of regulating affect and behaviour (Fonagy et. al. 2002:248). As a result, ‘mentalizing’ is a process that informs our experience of ourselves as much as our experience of others (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 263).

There is also a necessary experiential or affective dimension to ‘reflective functioning’ which ‘theory of mind’ lacks (Davidsen & Fosgerau 2015; Fonagy et. al 2002: 435 – 468). Later in this thesis I will argue that this dimension is particularly important in the characterisation of reflective functioning as an act of *imagination* rather than an act of thought. Drawing insight from philosophy, I hope to demonstrate that it is through acts of imagination that affect can achieve representation while retaining an experiential dimension (Kind 2001, Lennon 2015). For the purposes of the current discussion it is simply worth noting that the bodily, experiential dimension of mentalizing differentiates it from pure cognitive psychology and grounds it in a psychoanalytic tradition. Despite the fact that mentalization draws on a range of disciplines, therefore, its concern with the meaning an individual assigns to their affective experiences deems it a broadly psychoanalytic approach.

### **Comparing the Freudian and Mentalizing Approaches: Representing Reality**

Perhaps the most striking difference between the mentalization model and the classic Freudian approach is the different levels of interest they grant to the interpersonal environment (Fonagy et. al. 2002; Freud 1905b). As an instinct theorist, Freud was relatively unconcerned with the intimately interpersonal,

preferring instead to focus on the dynamic conflict engendered between ‘thoughtless’ biological instincts and civilized human society at large, which he characterised as impersonal and moralistic (See Chapter Four) (Freud 1930, Sulloway 1979).

Although many of his case studies focus on his patient’s interpersonal circumstances, these are taken to be a stage on which the patient’s instinctual conflict plays out (e.g. Freud 1905a, 1909); the ability of the patient to adequately process and represent the psychological world is taken for granted.

Yet despite this rather substantial divergence between the two approaches, it can be argued that the mentalization model’s focus on differentiation between ‘reality oriented’ and ‘reality indifferent’ modes of thought allows it to establish a greater resonance with classic Freudian theory than other contemporary interpersonal models. For instance, the interpersonal model of psychoanalysis famously put forward by Harry Stack Sullivan (1968), deals in a generalised notion of subjectivity which precludes the possibility of ‘truth’ or ‘knowledge’ outside the context of a shared experience (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983). Such models tend to focus more explicitly on two-person experiences and often restrict themselves to an analysis of the clinical situation in particular (rather than human interaction in general) (Stern 2003, Wallin 2007). While the mentalization model is not necessarily incompatible with the underlying philosophy of this approach, it has a vested interest in the difference between thinking which *aims* at a world outside of the mind and that which does not; psychic processes which have been labelled ‘reflective functioning’ (‘reality oriented’) and ‘psychic equivalence’ (‘reality indifferent’) respectively (Fonagy & Luyten 2009: 1383).

Fonagy and colleagues have noted that they have chosen to adopt the term 'psychic equivalence' to denote failures in 'mentalizing' rather than using Freud's original term 'psychic reality' (Fonagy et. al 2002: 254). The term 'psychic reality', they argue, has become misused in the psychoanalytic literature as a term for the patient's subjective experience in general, rather than to denote a specific psychological attitude of indifference to a world outside the mind. Their terminology therefore paradoxically moves away from Freud's in order to stay conceptually closer to his initial intention: to highlight the profound significance of the individual's psychological relationship to reality when differentiating psychopathology from sound mental health (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 254 -255). It is important to emphasise at this point that 'reality oriented' mental activity (imaginative and otherwise) should not be defined by its success at connecting with reality (a feat which could easily be attributed to any number of factors, including luck) but should be understood, rather, as a psychological attitude or intention in which the individual adopts *a mind-set that is geared towards reality*. An individual is not necessarily in good mental health because the majority of their beliefs are veridical; nor does holding beliefs that are not veridical necessarily imply psychopathology (Graham 2013). The relevant concern is whether the individual (or, to speak on a sub-personal level, a thought or belief (see Gardner 2000)) takes the *idea of a reality outside the mind into account*. This, as we shall see through the course of this thesis, is an observation which becomes all the more pertinent as psychoanalytic theory moves towards a working definition of 'reality' as an interpersonal phenomena concerned with internal psychological states (which, by their very nature, are unobservable entities which cannot be directly experienced

(Leudar & Costall ed. 2009<sup>4</sup>), as it becomes increasingly hard to draw a clean line between veridical and non-veridical judgments, making the subject's intent to adopt a 'reality oriented' *attitude* all the more significant. Moreover, this entails that in both the Freudian and the mentalization approach the difference between 'reality oriented' and 'reality indifferent' thinking does not first and foremost concern the *content* of the mental states (what is a belief or thought *about*) but the *stance* that an individual is able to adopt in regards *to* that content.

### **The Role of Mental Representations**

Another of the main 'meeting points' between the Freudian approach and the mentalization model is their shared focus on the nature and function of mental representations (Fonagy, Gergley, Jurist & Target 2002; Fonagy, Luyten, Allison & Campbell 2017a, 2017b; Freud 1900, 1915b, 1923). In the mentalization model, a reflective, 'reality oriented' stance is explicitly engendered by the capacity for an individual to form metarepresentations (thoughts about thoughts (Bermudez 2003). The theoretical details of this, along with the presumed developmental process that underpins it, will be explored in due course (see Chapters Five and Six). For the sake of a comparison with Freudian psychoanalysis, it is simply worth noting how the use of metarepresentations in the mentalization model may employ similar theoretical constructs to Freud's theory of concrete and symbolic thought (Freud 1900, 1925). In Freudian metapsychology, as I shall explain in depth in Chapter One, 'primary process' thinking (governed by the pleasure principle) is defined by its equation of thought and reality (Freud 1900, 1915a), whereas the 'secondary process' (under the sway of the reality principle) is portrayed as inherently geared

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<sup>4</sup> Some contemporary philosophers of mind have even argued that the mental states are *indeterminate* (i.e. that there is no objective fact of the matter regarding what an individual believes, thinks etc.) (see Ludwig 2003).

towards the external world and capable of tolerating the difference between thought and reality (Freud 1911, 1915a, 1925). A similar guiding principle is employed by the mentalization model to differentiate 'reflective functioning' and 'psychic equivalence'. 'Reflective functioning' can be seen as a 'reality oriented' process precisely because it implicitly grasps that mental states are *representational* and thus does not, in the manner of 'psychic equivalence' lead to a confusion between one's *own* mental states and either external states of affairs or the mental states of others (Fonagy et. al. 2002:253- 255).

Freud theorized that the aforementioned 'primary' and 'secondary' processes represented in terms of concrete 'thing' presentations and symbolic 'word' presentations respectively, claiming that concrete ideas become 'conscious' only when linked with the words that describe them (Freud 1915a, 1923). Aside from its explicit linguistic axis (or potentially because of it), symbolic 'secondary process' also differs from the concrete 'primary process' in its ability to tolerate negation, contradiction and degrees of certainty; psychological capacities which arguably allow the individual enough psychological distance from an idea to tolerate the notion that it may not match external states of affairs (Freud 1915a, 1925). So although Freud does not explicitly work with an individual's metarepresentational capacities (a theoretical development that came long after his time) he nevertheless draws an important link between the capacity for symbolic thinking and the capacity to tolerate the notion of an external world (Freud 1925). In this regard, the mentalization model and the Freudian model place modes of representation as central in determining a thought's ability to connect with external reality; linking types of thinking inherently with different attitudes towards the external world.

## **Representation as Regulation**

Another manner in which the mentalization model arguably signifies a 'return to Freud' is in their shared view of the functional role of representations as intrapsychic regulators. Freud developed his model of the mind based on the central biological premise that sophisticated organisms need the capacity for self-regulation in order to survive (Freud 1895/1950, Hopkins 2016). This capacity to self-regulate, in Freud's view, corresponds with the release of psychic tension; a feat which can only be achieved adequately through the satisfaction of an instinct (Freud 1895/1950). Secondary process 'reality oriented' thinking plays an important part in this process by allowing a suspension of automatic release (which produces an ultimately fruitless hallucinatory experience) in order for the individual to navigate the external environment to find genuine, lasting satisfaction (Freud 1895/1950, 1911). Following a similar format, the mentalization model proposes that bringing affect under cognitive representations can stabilize dysregulation and thus allow the individual greater adaptability to their interpersonal world (Fonagy & Luyten 2009). Metarepresentations also function to allow the individual to attribute somatic and affective experiences to themselves, while simultaneously adopting a reflective stance on thoughts and feelings that may be motivating others (Fonagy & Luyten 2017).

There is no doubt that clear and substantial differences remain between the Freudian approach and the mentalization model even leaving aside the obvious difference in emphasis on interpersonal perception. For instance, it is arguably not unsubstantial that in the mentalization model 'affects' rather than 'instincts' or 'drives' are delineated as the psychic force that requires reigning in with representations (Panksepp 2012, Solms & Zellner 2012). Perhaps even more importantly, the

mentalization model's account of development, derived as it is from object relations and attachment theory (Bateman & Fonagy 2010), envisages the infant moving from a state of dependency to one of reflective independence; effectively reversing the Freudian narrative of the infant growing out of autoeroticism into mature object sexuality (Freud 1905b). Yet despite this, their shared emphasis on the existence of two basic forms of mental representations which have different inherent capacities to represent 'reality', with the 'reality oriented' mode of representation playing an active role in biological regulation gives the two approaches a broadly common ground that should not be missed.

Finally, it is worth noting that the mentalization model, as a developing theory, has matured over time in a direction that strengthens the role of mental representations and somewhat diminishes its intersubjective elements, granting it more potential for resonance with Freudian theory at its current stage of development than at its inception (Fonagy et. al 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). Within the mentalization model, the capacity for 'reflective functioning' is thought to develop within an infant-caregiver relational dyad which is characterised by a secure attachment style, thus establishing a link between attachment security and the capacity for mentalization (See Chapters Five and Six for a full account) (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 44-46). Drawing on empirical studies which suggest that attachment style in infancy could act as a good predictor of attachment style in adulthood (Crittenden & Landini 2011), the developers of the mentalization approach proposed that once the capacity for 'reflective functioning' is set up early in life, mentalizing and attachment security continue to mutually reinforce one another, providing the individual with an inherent resilience against psychopathology into adulthood (Fonagy et. al. 2002). Analogously, it has been suggested that insecure attachment style in infancy

correlated with vulnerability to psychopathology in later life, with both manifesting a diminished capacity to take a reflective stance on the mental states of self and other (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 45).

Despite this, more recent empirical studies have failed to replicate the finding that attachment style remains relatively stable throughout the life span, and suggest instead that attachment tends to vary both over time and in the context of different interpersonal relationships (Fonagy 2001, Fonagy et. al 2017a, 2017b). This poses a substantial risk to the mentalization model's account of development, prompting the question of how the capacity for mentalizing in adult life can be determined during early development when secure attachment itself, the psychological context in which mentalizing is allegedly set up, is not. This hurdle, along with insight gleaned from clinical experience of working with patients who present as 'hard to reach' (such as those diagnosed with a Personality Disorder) led the developers of the mentalization model to propose the notion of epistemic trust (Fonagy et. al. 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). This concept will come to play a highly important role in the present argument (see, in particular, Chapters Five and Seven) and is worth outlining briefly here as it demonstrates the importance, once again, that representational capacities assume in the mentalization approach.

Epistemic trust, briefly summarized, refers to the attitude an individual takes towards social and emotional communication. More specifically, it denotes whether the individual treats such communication as relevant to the self and generalizable to other contexts (Fonagy et. al. 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). An attitude of epistemic trust is thought to develop within a securely attached relationship: within the context of a secure dyad the caregiver is able to mirror the infant's emotional states back at them in a way that implicitly communicates to the infant that others have minds,



thoughts and feelings much like the infant's own (ibid). This, in turn, fosters both an attitude of openness to learning from others and the capacity to learn from one's own experiences (Csibra & Gergely: 2009; Fonagy et. al. 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b. See Chapters Five and Seven for a full account). For the purpose the current discussion, it is simply worth noting that despite the fact that epistemic trust is set up within the context of a securely attached relationship, it can then function independently over the course of an individual's life. This has the consequence of making an individual's psychological relationship to the *representation and communication of ideas* paramount over their relationship to other individuals per se; a fact which reinforces the arguably Freudian idea that it is representational capacities and the psychological attitude an individual adopts towards them which determines psychopathology.

It also serves to emphasise the fact that the mentalization model, in spite of its focus on the interpersonal world, should not be classed as a form of relational or intersubjective psychoanalysis (Stern 1968). Leaving aside the fact that the mentalization approach has a vested interest in defining 'reality' more sharply than intersubjective approaches, the focus on representations that is engendered by the theoretical constructs such as 'psychic equivalence', 'reflective functioning' and 'epistemic trust' creates a system of theories that arguably approach a metapsychology. These, much like the Freudian account, aim to situate psychological representations within a *biologically grounded* account of the mind. In contrast, intersubjective and relational approaches have tended to eschew metapsychology in an aim to more accurately capture the experience of the clinical situation unburdened by rigid theoretical systems (Stern 2003, Wallin 2007). Furthermore, this act of characterising clinical interactions takes place within the

context of an implicit philosophy which deems scientific accounts of developmental and mental functioning as unnecessary and irrelevant (Stern 2003). The mentalization model, in contrast, is an unapologetically empirical theory which stays close to Freud's initial aim to ground psychoanalysis in evolutionary biology, aiming to understand how different representational processes can arise out of various bodily and sensory experiences (Csibra & Gergely 2009; Fonagy et. al. 2017a, 2017b; Freud 1895; Sulloway 1979). The most striking resemblance between the two that can be taken away, therefore, is that the imagination plays an important part in creating the link between *felt experience* and representation.

## **Chapter One**

### **Insulated from the World: Daydreaming and Mental Imagery in Freudian**

#### **Metapsychology**

“One shuts one's eyes and hallucinates; one opens them and thinks in words”

- Sigmund Freud ‘Project for a Scientific Psychology’ (Freud. 1950 [1895]: 434)

“We may lay it down that a happy person never fantasies, only an unsatisfied one. The motive forces of fantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single fantasy is the fulfilment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality”

- Sigmund Freud. ‘Creative Writers and Daydreaming’ (Freud 1907:146)

This first chapter will lay out an in-depth reading of Freud's theory of the imagination through a survey of his pre-psychoanalytic and metapsychological texts (Breuer & Freud 1895, Freud 1895, 1900, 1911, 1912, 1915a, 1915b, 1923, 1937; Freud & Stengel 1891). I will demonstrate that Freud presents the imagination as a mental process that occupies an *intermediate area* between the conscious and the unconscious minds (Freud 1923:21), a fact that can be attributed to the qualities that the imagination shares with Freud's theory of the ‘primary process’ (Freud 1895, 1900, 1915a). As evidenced by the quote above (Freud 1907:146), Freud also creates strong links between imagination and the pleasure principle; a psychic driving force that he defined by its indifference to reality (Freud 1915b). This, alongside the imagination's visual character, creates an account whereby imaginative processes insulate the individual from reality by generating visual scenes

which both interfere with their capacity to focus on external perceptions, and focus the gratification of internal needs rather than the consideration of the external environment (Freud 1907, 1900, 1911).

Although the juxtaposition between imagistic and linguistic representations will be a strong theme in the argument that follows, it should be noted that Freud, to his credit, does not create hard and fast distinctions between visual and verbal forms of representation. It is clear that he did not hold the belief that all reality-indifferent mental activity was imagistic; a notable exception being the streams of delusional thoughts – often portrayed in a verbal form – that are clung to by sufferers of obsessional neurosis (see the section entitled ‘Reality Indifferent Verbal Thought’ below for a broader discussion of this (Breuer & Freud 1895: 177-8). Rather than force a dichotomy between the visual and the verbal in Freud’s work, therefore, this chapter sets itself the more modest but also more enlightening task of considering how Freud applies (what he considered to be) the inherent properties of mental imagery to capture and characterise states of fantasy. In other words, it will consider why imagistic representation ‘suits’ reality-indifferent thinking (Freud 1900, 1923:21). This will involve an analysis of the relationship between the mode of representation (how an idea is depicted in the mind) and the mental function (what the mind can subsequently ‘do’) with an idea. Before delving into Freud’s dense metapsychological theory, however, it is worth giving a broad sense of how I will read his theory of the conscious imagination. I will not aim to assess, at this stage in my argument, whether or not Freud’s theories themselves are accurate; it will be enough to aim for a clear picture of what he says on the matter, which is an intricate enough task in its own right.

### Half-way to the Unconscious

Freud's works do not contain evidence that he made a meaningful distinction between the terms imagination, fantasy and daydreaming but suggest that he construed the imagination *a priori* as a reality-indifferent mode of thought (Freud 1907). This is most likely a simple result of his pre-theoretical understanding of the term 'imagination' which served to shape his construal from the outset<sup>5</sup> (Hardy 2016; Kind 2001; Lennon 2015). This is not to say that Freud did not offer his own highly unique psychoanalytic account of the imagination: although he may have begun with several assumptions regarding its nature, Freud then sought to offer an explanation both its genesis and its function that revolved around his understanding of the unconscious mind (Breuer & Freud 1895; Freud 1907). The account he arrived at, I will argue, is the very same that is used to explain the pleasure principle, the unconscious, dreams, neurosis, infantile thought and several other processes that are definitive of the Freudian thought: the wish-fulfilling hallucination; an internally generated sensory process in which instinctual wishes are represented as though they are being fulfilled. It is around this central theoretical node, I shall argue below, that Freud's theory of imagination should be read and understood.

In many ways, conscious acts of fantasy seem to represent an element of the unconscious in the conscious mind. Like dreams, they are mental processes whose essential purpose is the temporary satisfaction of an instinct through wish-fulfilment (Freud 1900, 1907). They also tend to have a sensorial and associative element which aligns them conceptually with Freud's primary process (a feat only made stronger by the fact that Freud's portrayed conscious thinking – the 'secondary

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<sup>5</sup> In the next chapter I will consider some common philosophical theories of imaginative processes which may have led him to adopt the view that he did.

process' -as inherently linguistic). Conscious fantasy is also presented as borderline pathological. In 'Creative Writers and Daydreaming', for instance, Freud actively warns against the perils of an over active imagination, stating:

If phantasies become over-luxuriant and over-powerful, the conditions are laid for an onset of neurosis or psychosis. Phantasies, moreover, are the immediate mental precursors of the distressing symptoms complained of by our patients. Here a broad by-path branches off into pathology. I cannot pass over the relation of phantasies to dreams. Our dreams at night are nothing else than phantasies like these, as we can demonstrate from the interpretation of dreams (Freud 1907: 148).

There is also, it can be said, a parity with which Freud speaks of conscious and unconscious acts of imagination, at times making the two processes appear almost interchangeable<sup>6</sup>. In "From a History of an Infantile Neurosis" Freud gives the following account of the neurotic mind in which the imagination portrayed as the mechanism at work in the unconscious:

If neurotics are endowed with the evil characteristic of diverting their interest from the present and of attaching it to these regressive substitutes, the products of their imagination, then there is absolutely nothing for it but to follow upon their tracks and bring these unconscious productions into consciousness; for, leaving on one side their lack of value from the point of view of reality, they are of the utmost value from our point of view, since they are for the moment the bearers

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<sup>6</sup> It perhaps worth noting here that Freud uses the term '*phantasy*' rather than 'fantasy' to refer to both. I have not opted to do the same here as a way of reducing the confusion with Melanie Klein's theory of 'unconscious phantasy' which, as we shall see in Chapter Four, comes with a range of theoretical baggage attached.

and possessors of the interest which we want to set free so as to be able to direct it on to the tasks of the present (Freud 1918: 49).

Freud's liberal use of the term 'imagination' to refer to unconscious as well as conscious acts can be taken to strengthen the claim that it is a form of functioning that lies conceptually closer to the primary unconscious processes than other aspects of conscious thought which tend, as a general rule, to come under the sway of the Reality Principle. Yet there are also important ways in which daydreaming is more like conscious thought than unconscious processing, even leaving aside the obvious fact that one has, by definition, a greater awareness of the conscious imagination. Firstly, Freud argued that daydreams differ from dreams in so far as the individual experiencing them does so with the attendant recognition that the fantasy does not align with reality. A daydream taken, unquestioningly, to be veridical (in the same manner, say, as a dream) would not be an act of fantasy but a hallucination (Freud 1933). Thus Freud states that we are under the sway of a daydream "we do not experience or hallucinate anything in them but imagine something, we know that we are having a phantasy, we do not see but think" (Freud 1933:98).

To continue the comparison with dreams, it is possible to conclude that daydreams have both an increased level of structure and coherence than night dreams and also a greater availability to linguistic resources; two features which I shall argue below are most likely connected to each other. Although I will argue that Freud saw acts of conscious imagination as containing a sensorial element (which likely aids their capacity for instinctual wish-fulfilment), they are also capable of constructing sophisticated chains of verbal thinking, alongside a much higher quality of narrative cohesion. In this sense, they are undeniably 'conscious' in terms of their level of psychic structure alongside the awareness attached to them.

### **The Structural Place of the Image in Freud's Metapsychology**

The Freudian imagination, in occupying a 'twilight zone' between conscious and unconscious processing, arguably suffers from a lack of structural position in Freud's schematic account of the mind. Alongside a differing theory of the nature of the imagination, it can therefore be argued that the Freudian model and the mentalization approach differ in the theoretical emphasis they grant the imagination. Freud's model, which does not place an individual's imaginative capacities at the heart of their psychic health, contains a theory of the conscious imagination that portrays as an inevitable but unnecessary process; a fact which is arguably reflected in the imagination's lack of structural position in Freud's schematic models of the mind. The mentalization model, in considering the imagination as central to psychological good health, unsurprisingly places it as a central concept in its taxonomy. Thus understanding the changed role of the imagination within the psychoanalytic landscape does not simply entail noticing its different conceptualisation, but also the differing degree of focus lent to it.

Both the imagination (as a general phenomenon) and mental imagery (in particular) are, somewhat paradoxically, granted many features of unconscious processes, despite the fact that they are mental events which – on the level of awareness – are fully conscious. Conscious imaginings are treated as an offshoot of unconscious modes of processing; a relic from infancy and childhood which in the adult mind is best dampened as much as possible (the notable exception to this being sublimation through artistic creation (e.g. Freud 1910)). In what follows, I hope to demonstrate that appreciating the imagination's schematic 'place' (or lack thereof) in Freud's theory is an integral part of grasping he believed it to work in the mind.



## Freud's Developing Theories

Freud's theories of mental representation are inextricable from his metapsychological models of mind, so before continuing with an analysis of his commentary on the imagination I will first lay the groundwork of his metapsychological theory. Freud's theories of mental functioning were in flux throughout his career and any attempt to be too schematic about his changing formulations of the mind is arguably doomed to fail; it would be unable to capture the fact that Freud's theories were often subtly responsive to both the intellectual climate surrounding him and the clinical work taking place at his practice. Nevertheless, sketching the main structural features of the Freud's theories and charting the major shifts across his career should help put the rest of the chapter, which involves an in-depth analysis of some key Freudian concepts, into a broader context. As the aim is not to provide a comprehensive account of Freudian theory, many of the subtleties will be missed: the hope is that the details relevant to this thesis will be filled out in more depth throughout the course of the thesis as a whole.

Joseph Sandler has argued that the chronology of Freud's models of the mind can be broken down usefully into three periods of work: the pre-psychoanalytic 'affect-trauma model' the 'topographical model' and the 'structural model' (Sandler 1997). The first chronologically, the 'affect-trauma' phase, which may be best exemplified by Freud's work on hysteria with his colleague Joseph Breuer, lasted until approximately 1897 (ibid). Although at this stage many of Freud's key theoretical constructs were already in play (for example, Freud and Breuer drew on the notions of conflict and defence in order to explain the formation of hysterical symptoms) few had reached theoretical maturity. Freud and Breuer famously posited that hysterical symptoms could be cleared up through the 'talking cure' or 'cathartic

method', so-called because it was based on the hypothesis that transforming traumatic memories into speech served the function of reducing the dammed-up affect attached to them in a process known as 'abreaction'. Visual representation had a key part to play in this process, as memories would initially rise to consciousness in the form of a vivid recollection, often with a hallucinatory quality, and had to be 'translated' from visual scenes into linguistic utterances in order for the 'abreaction' of affect to take place (Breuer & Freud 1895). The pathologisation of the image, I will argue below, begins in this early pre-psychoanalytic period with Freud urging his early patients to 'describe what you see' and become cured through their conversion of imagistic representations into language<sup>7</sup> (Breuer & Freud 1895).

What definitively marks the 'affect-trauma model' as pre-psychoanalytic (Freud, notably, used neither the terms 'psychoanalysis' nor 'metapsychology' until 1896) is its emphasis on external reality over internally-generated phantasy. Freud believed that his hysterical patients were reacting to genuine memories of seduction and did not take into account what he later came to see was an inherent fluidity in such memories as they became open to distortion by unconscious wishes. The second phase of writings, which introduced the 'topographical model', arguably came into being at this point, with death of seduction theory making way for a new emphasis on the role of fictive, 'reality indifferent' states of mind. This new approach complemented the role of childhood sexual trauma with that of fantasy and wish-fulfilment: psychopathology and could still be seen as a reaction to infantile sexual experiences, yet these could have happened merely in fantasy and not in reality (Freud 1896b). In order to bring about psychoanalytic cure, therefore, to sift through

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion on the arguably contentious difference between 'speech' and 'language' see the section below entitled 'Behaving like Language: Freud's Theory of the Secondary Process'

a patient's history one must tap into the psychosexual fantasies housed in their unconscious mind (Freud 1900, Sandler 1997).

Unconscious fantasies can have the same effect on the mind as real events as a result of the unconscious mind's inability to distinguish between real and imagined scenarios (Freud 1915a). Freud proposed that this definitive feature of the dynamically unconscious mind is a preserved relic of the very first mental act in infantile life, in which the hungry infant has a wish-fulfilling hallucination of feeding in order to temporarily stave off instinctual cravings (Freud 1895/1950, 1911). It was with the introduction of the topographical model and its accompanying conceptualization of the dynamic, primary process unconscious that Freud acknowledged the existence of a mode of thought which has neither the interest nor the ability to connect with external reality. In the 1900 publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud dedicated an entire chapter titled "The Psychology of Dream Processes" to outlining this new 'topographical model'; using it to explain how the mind can simultaneously generate 'reality oriented' and reality-indifferent thinking (Freud 1900:509-610). When these two modes of thought are in conflict, Freud asserted, psychic symptomatology arises.

### **Pathology in a Freudian Context**

Before moving onto a deeper explanation of how the topographical model provides the context in which Freud's characterisation of the imagination as quasi-pathological manifests, it is worth pausing to consider what the notion of psychopathology means in a Freudian context.

Freud was revolutionary, in part, precisely because he insisted on a continuum between mental health and psychopathology drawing out, across an impressive

array of works, how the universal developmental narrative could explain both healthy and pathological states of mind in adulthood, with psychological growth primarily concerned with the resolution of a series of psychosexual conflicts that could be achieved in a variety of adaptive and non-adaptive ways (Freud 1905b). To take just one example, Freud's comments on the development of a sexual fetish in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* show the sexual overvaluation of seemingly asexual objects is equally present in a 'normal' sexual attraction:

What is substituted for the sexual object is some part of the body (such as the foot or hair) which is in general very inappropriate for sexual purposes, or some inanimate object which bears an assignable relation to the person whom it replaces and preferably to that person's sexuality (e.g. a piece of clothing or underlinen ). The point of contact with the normal is provided by the psychologically essential overvaluation of the sexual object, which inevitably extends to everything that is associated with it. A certain degree of fetishism is thus habitually present in normal love, especially in those stages of it in which the normal sexual aim seems unattainable or its fulfilment prevented (Freud 1905b:52).

A Freudian view, then, can be seen as one in which psychopathology exists in degrees rather than as a set of discrete taxonomies. This fundamental guiding principle allowed Freud to assert that dreams and pathological states of mind operate according to the same underlying mechanism with the result that the psychological structure of one could be studied via an analysis of the other (Freud 1895/1950). In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, for instance, Freud credits his success in understanding the origin of dream processes to his prior work on clinical psychopathology. In unpacking the psychological origin of the dream work he writes:

We have already in Chapter VI segregated this second psychical process as being the dream-work proper. What light have we now to throw upon its origin? It would not be possible for us to answer this question if we had not made some headway in the study of the psychology of the neuroses, and particularly of hysteria. We have found from this that the same irrational psychical processes, and others that we have not specified, dominate the production of hysterical symptoms... We accordingly borrow the following thesis from the theory of hysteria: a normal train of thought is only submitted to abnormal psychical treatment of the sort we have been describing if an unconscious wish, derived from infancy and in a state of repression has been transferred on to it. (Freud 1900: 597 - 598).

Dreams, an everyday occurrence, therefore serve as a reminder that primary process mechanisms are constantly operative in everyone; with psychopathology simply representing an increased influence of such processes on conscious waking life. Their inherently reality-indifferent nature aligns them with dream processes to a greater extent than other forms of conscious thought, and may therefore be guilty of opening up the conscious mind to a greater influence from the unconscious in waking life.

### **Psychic Conflict**

I have argued that Freud's claim that day-dreams are the 'immediate mental precursor' (Freud 1907: 148) of psychopathological symptoms is due to his theory that the imagination is a mental act which inherently pulls the individual away from external reality. Yet within Freudian paradigm it is psychic conflict and not reality-indifferent processes themselves which cause the individual to fall ill. Such conflict may arise because the conscious part of the mind finds the unconscious wish

unpalatable, or because two unconscious wishes strive for different outcomes (as we shall see below, the lack of the principle of contradiction in the unconscious mind makes space for incompatible wishes or ideas to co-exist without being recognised as mutually exclusive) (Freud 1915a).

Daydreams are, then, not sufficient in themselves to constitute symptoms; each fantasy can only account for one side of a conflictual dyad. Yet in strengthening the pleasure-driven side of the mind, conscious acts of fantasy can be seen to weaken the 'reality oriented' ego's dominion over mental life, encouraging conflict by making wish-fulfilling states a worthy rival of 'reality oriented' processes. This may explain why Freud can be seen to adopt a moralistic tone when speaking of an individual's tendency to slip into the realm of the imagination. For instance, when describing his preference for alternating psychotherapy with a rest-cure in *Studies on Hysteria*, he quotes:

Moreover, I have adopted the habit of combining cathartic psychotherapy with a rest-cure which gives me the advantage of being able on the one hand to avoid the very disturbing introduction of new psychical impressions during a psychotherapy, and on the other hand to remove the boredom of a rest-cure, in which the patients not infrequently fall into the habit of harmful daydreaming (Breuer & Freud 1895: 267).

Elsewhere, he seems to lament the inevitable occurrence of daydreams even in mentally disciplined individuals:

Even in people who do not habitually allow day-dreams to pass through their minds alongside their usual activity, some situations give rise during considerable periods of time to this simultaneous existence of changing

impressions and reactions from external life on the one hand, and an affectively-coloured group of ideas on the other. *Post equitem sedet atra cura* [‘black care sits behind the rider’]. Among these situations the most prominent are those of looking after someone dear to us who is ill, and of being in love (Breuer & Freud 1895:234).

An individual’s openness to daydreaming can be considered important because unconscious wishes that drive psychoneuroses are not necessarily generated in the unconscious, but often appear initially in a conscious form. Towards the beginning of “Hysterical Phantasies and their Relation to Bisexuality”, for example, Freud states:

Unconscious phantasies have either been unconscious all along and have been formed in the unconscious; or - as is more often the case - they were once conscious phantasies, day-dreams, and have since been purposely forgotten and have become unconscious through ‘repression’. Their content may afterwards either have remained the same or have undergone alterations, so that the present unconscious phantasies are derivatives of the once conscious ones (Freud 1907: 161).

In light of this, it can be argued, Freud’s conceptualisation of the day-dream as the ‘precursor’ of a psychic symptom is highly apt: they are a form of mental experience which can initiate a series of psychological events that may conclude with the manifestation of a psychic symptom.

Freud’s theory of the imagination cannot, I hope to argue below, be understood without appreciating his notion of psychological wish-fulfilment; a mental process which enacts a futile attempt to soothe the body through the mind. Taking this core mental act as a blueprint allows us to see how Freud adopted a notion of the

imagination that was not only inherently indifferent to reality, but also that should be juxtaposed with “secondary *thought consciousness*” (Freud 1897: 208, emphasis in the original). I will not aim to assess, at this stage in my argument, whether or not Freud’s theories themselves are accurate; it will be enough to aim for a clear picture of what he says on the matter, which is an intricate enough task in its own right.

### **Word and Image in Freud’s Pre-Psychoanalytic Texts**

The pathologisation of sensorial thought processes, taken to be essentially visual in nature, is arguably a prominent theme in Freud’s early pre-psychoanalytic work. This is especially true of his work with hysterics (as mentioned above), which he took to be a form of neurosis that particularly afflicted ‘visual’ types. Following John Forrester, I will suggest Freud’s theory of language and imagery in ‘Studies on Hysteria’ is best understood in the context of his lesser known theory of the language disorder ‘aphasia’ (Forrester: 1980).

Although neither “On Aphasia” nor “Studies on Hysteria” are metapsychological texts in the strict sense, they both contain explicit theories regarding the juxtaposition of imagistic and linguistic representation which can helpfully inform a reading of Freud’s later works. Rejecting the intellectual status quo at the time, Freud proposed explanations of both aphasia and hysteria which hinged on their conceptualization as psychological rather than neurological disorders. Although Freud was writing strictly as a neurologist at the time, the importance of this work to the development of a psychoanalytic approach to the mind has been recognised several times, with John Forrester famously concluding in “Language and the Origins of Psychoanalysis” that “Freud’s work on aphasia...is the *sine non qua* birth of psychoanalysis” (Forrester 1980: 1).



One of Freud's major contributions to the field of aphasia scholarship was his proposal that aphasic symptoms, rather than being the result of a lesions in the brain, are caused by a general lowering of function which disrupts chains of association between the different components of a linguistic representation (Freud & Stengel 1891). He re-characterised aphasia as a disorder that targets the coherence of mental representations by stripping words of their proper meaning. Rejecting the dichotomy between sensory aphasia (the inability to understand language) and motor aphasia (the inability to produce language), Freud proposed two new categories he called "verbal aphasia" and "asymbolic aphasia". In the former, the internal structure of a word presentation is broken apart, in the latter it is the connection between word and object presentations which falls apart (Freud & Stengel 1891).

Forrester has argued that Freud's writings on hysteria paint it as a form of asymbolic aphasia, where ideas become fundamentally split off from the linguistic representations that accompany them. The difference between the aphasic and the hysteric, it could be argued, is that the former's condition is global (it does not necessarily apply to one idea over others) whereas the hysterics 'aphasic repression' applies only to a particular, psychologically significant idea (Forrester 1980).

Freud was also controversial in his assertion that hysteria should be understood as a mental rather than a physical affliction and therefore one which can be cured through psychotherapy; 'the talking cure' (Breuer & Freud 1895:30). Talking was believed to be 'cathartic': speech acts as a means that allowed the affect that built up in certain memories to dissipate (Breuer & Freud 1895). As mentioned above, Freud believed at this stage that he was working with memory rather than fantasy: the remembered scenes that hysterics suffered from were genuine, unelaborated on by

the mind in any significant way, and therefore as good as evaporated when they were articulated. This should be taken in context of the recognition that the aim of therapy at this time was the reduction of affect: a goal which became increasingly more nuanced as Freud's work progressed into the realm of unconscious wishes and fantasies (rather than forgotten memories) (Breuer & Freud 1895, Freud 1937).

Freud and Breuer linked the development of hysteria with the tendency to disconnect with reality through habitual states of reveries that quickly descends into psychopathology. States of reverie, if they became habitual, quickly laid the path for the development of full blown hysteria:

We have nothing new to say on the question of the origin of these dispositional hypnoid states. They often, it would seem, grow out of the day-dreams which are so common even in healthy people and which needlework and similar occupations render women especially prone (Breuer & Freud 1895: 13).

Anna O. in her notorious treatment by Breuer, was described as exhibiting this pathological tendency:

This girl, who was bubbling over with intellectual vitality, led an extremely monotonous existence in her puritanically minded family. She embellished her life in a manner which probably influenced her decisively in the direction of her illness, by indulging in systemic daydreaming, which she described as her 'private theatre'. While everyone thought she was attending, she was living through fairy tales in her imagination; but she was always on the spot when spoken to, so that no one was aware of it. She pursued this activity almost continuously while she was engaged on her household duties, which she discharged unexceptionably. I shall presently have to describe the way in which

this habitual daydreaming while she was well passed over into illness without a break (Breuer & Freud 1895: 20 -21).

Freud and Breuer acknowledged the pathological influence of breaking away from reality in states of daydreaming; so called ‘hypnoid’ or ‘twilight’ states of mind (Breuer & Freud 1895: 26). Importantly, they emphasise that such states are only pathological when they are affectively imbued; absent states of mind, when they are not particularly emotionally charged, do not pose such a risk<sup>8</sup>. Here we see an explicit manifestation of an assumption (which arguably remains intact throughout Freud’s writings) that affect and visuality share a close conceptual link (see also Freud 1923). This text also introduces the notion that linguistic thought is a healthier alternative to the visual imagination: hysterical symptoms, brought on by a tendency for imaginative thought, disappear once the highly visual memories that accompany them have been diffused through speech (Breuer & Freud 1895).

### **Introducing Metapsychology: Language and Imagery in Freudian Theory**

Freud remained loyal to the idea that language is the dominant mode of representation for the ‘conscious’ mind throughout his work. In his 1915 paper ‘The Unconscious’, which develops and streamlines the topographical model introduced in ‘The Interpretation of Dreams’, Freud lays out the metapsychological foundations for this claim (Freud 1915a).

The topographical model, though schematic, is highly useful for a discussion of the imagination because of its focus on different modes of representation, which

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<sup>8</sup> “Thus neither ‘absence of mind’ during energetic work nor unemotional twilight states are pathogenic; on the other hand, reveries that are filled with emotion and states of fatigue arising from protracted affects are pathogenic. The broodings of a care-ridden man, the anxiety of a person watching at the sick-bed of someone dear to him, the day-dreams of a lover - these are states of this second kind” (Breuer & Freud 1895:26)

have seen above are of paramount importance when assessing the imagination's connection to a reality outside the mind. Where the later and better-known 'structural model' (Freud 1923) focused on the three components of mind the id, ego and super-ego (often anthropomorphically characterised as agents with conflicting intentions), the topographical model takes the mode of representation of a thought as definitive regarding its status as conscious or unconscious (Freud 1915a). Dynamically unconscious thoughts are represented according to the primary process, whereas conscious and pre-conscious thoughts must be represented according to the secondary process (preconscious thoughts are descriptively unconscious, but there is nothing preventing them being conscious per se).

The topographical model centres on three distinct mental systems: the system unconscious, the system preconscious and the system conscious (Freud 1915a). According to this model, an idea is dynamically unconscious (or repressed) if it resides within the system unconscious which represents mental activity in "primary process" thought structures. The "primary process" is a mental event that predates conceptual thought and continues to exist unconsciously in the adult mind throughout life. It only rises to the level of awareness in dreams, psychosis and to a smaller extent in jokes and slips of the tongue. In "The Unconscious" Freud sums up the features of the primary process as follows:

These instinctual impulses co-ordinate with one another, exist side by side without being influenced by one another, and are exempt from mutual contradiction...there are in this system no negation, no doubt, no degrees of certainty... To sum-up: exemption from mutual contradiction, primary process (motility of cathexis) timelessness and replacement of external by psychical reality (Freud, 1915a: 185)

The secondary process, in contrast, represents according to language (the word presentation), tolerates causal and temporal relationships, does not tolerate contradiction and can contain negations. Both the preconscious and conscious minds represent according to the secondary process as although the preconscious mind contains ideas which are descriptively unconscious, these ideas are capable of becoming conscious. The conversion of an idea from dynamically unconscious to preconscious involves the addition of a linguistic element as Freud describes below:

We now seem to know all at once what the difference is between a conscious and an unconscious presentation. The two are not, as we supposed, different registrations of the same content in different psychical localities, nor yet different functional states of cathexis in the same locality; but the conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone (Freud 1915a: 200).

It is hard to assign conscious, visual thinking a position within the Freud's primary/secondary process distinction, even if we allow for the fact that the primary and secondary processes may represent two ends of a spectrum rather than a binary distinction (Freud 1915a: 190). By virtue of being non-verbal, visual thought is considered outside of the secondary process and thus, in one sense, unconscious. On the other hand, by virtue of being a phenomenally conscious act that the individual is able to "own", thinking visually is a conscious act.

It was with the introduction of the structural model in the 'Ego and the Id' that Freud first acknowledged the problem of a form of 'visual consciousness' head-on. This may have been part of a general overhaul of his metapsychological theorising

up to this point, which was failing to adequately reflect what Freud was experiencing in his clinical practice. By taking the conscious/unconscious nature of an idea as the most important feature of the mind the topographical model risks an inherent contradiction: if there is a part of the self that 'knows' illicit unconscious desires and another part of the self which neither knows nor cares to know, which part of the self decides what to repress and what to allow into consciousness? (Also see Sartre 1943). One of Freud's motivations for introducing the structural model was to mediate this problem by proposing an unconscious part of the ego: a part of the mind that prevents ideas from becoming conscious only by operating outside of awareness itself (Freud 1923).

This, although monumental for Freudian theory in general, admittedly did not have a major impact on his theory of the imagination. In fact, it is during a passage of the "Ego and the Id" in which Freud reaffirms his belief that consciousness is linguistic, bound up with the secondary process word-presentation, that he acknowledges 'thinking in pictures' as an outlier:

We must not be lead, in the interests of simplification, perhaps, to forget the importance of optical mnemonic residues, when they are of things, or deny that it is possible for thought-processes to become conscious through a reversion to optical mnemonic residues, and that in many people this seems to be the favoured method. The study of dreams and of preconscious phantasies shown in Varendonck's observations can give us an idea of the special character of this visual thinking. We learn that what becomes conscious in it is as a rule is only the concrete subject-matter of the thought, and that the relations between the various aspects of this subject matter, which is what specially characterises thoughts, cannot be given visual expression. Thinking in pictures is, therefore, a

very incomplete form of becoming conscious. In some way, too, it stands nearer to unconscious processes than does thinking in words, and it is unquestionably older than the latter both ontogenetically and phylogenetically (Freud 1923: 21)

This brief but theoretically rich passage draws together Freud's insights on visual mental activity from elsewhere in his work. His opening recognition that for some people the process of becoming conscious relies on images rather than words can be seen to refer to Charcot's notion that individuals have a disposition to be 'auditifs', 'moteurs' or 'visuels' (Breuer & Freud 1895). Freud, as we have seen, drew on these distinctions in his understanding that hysteria is a form of psychopathology that typically affects 'visual types' (ibid).

The passage goes on, however, to draw out the universal features of visual thinking that cannot be consigned to individual disposition. Most notably, he claims that visual thinking is more primitive than verbal thought, which entails that it is an 'incomplete' form of conscious awareness that can also be seen to characterise early development. These claims all arise elsewhere in Freud's work. The enigmatic notion, for example, that pictorial thought is an 'incomplete' form of conscious awareness is repeated in 'A Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams' in which he attempts a delineation between the system conscious and the system preconscious:

The answer can be given if we now proceed to define more precisely the third of our psychical systems, the system Cs., which hitherto we have not sharply distinguished from the Pcs... Nevertheless, even so, the fact of a thing's becoming conscious still does not wholly coincide with its belonging to a system, for we have learnt that it is possible to be aware of sensory mnemonic images to

which we cannot possibly allow a psychical location in the systems Cs. or Pcpt (Freud 1917: 232, emphasis added).

Freud's relegation of imagistic thought outside of 'the system conscious' (also referred to as 'secondary *thought consciousness*' in a letter to Fliess (Freud 1896a)) can be linked with its prominence in dreams and early childhood experiences, both of which are under the sway of the pleasure principle and the primary process. While acknowledging that people's tendency to 'think in pictures' varies in adulthood, Freud argues that in childhood visual representations predominate. This fact can be used to explain why formal regression in dreaming takes the form of a translation back into visual scenes:

It is moreover a familiar observation that, even in those whose memory is not normally of a visual type, the earliest recollections of childhood retain far into life the quality of sensory vividness. If we now bear in mind how great a part is played in the dream-thoughts by infantile experiences or by phantasies based upon them, how frequently portions of them re-emerge in the dream-content and how often the dream-wishes themselves are derived from them, we cannot dismiss the probability that in dreams too the transformation of thoughts into visual images may be in part the result of the attraction which memories couched in visual form and eager for revival bring to bear upon thoughts cut off from consciousness and struggling to find expression. On this view a dream might be described as a substitute for an infantile scene modified by being transferred on to a recent experience (Freud 1900: 546).

The final theme that can be drawn from Freud's analysis of 'thinking in pictures' in the 'Ego and the Id' comes from his reference to Johan Varendonck's *The*



*Psychology of Day-dreaming* (Varendonck 1921). The reference to this work on daydreams as a means of elucidating the nature of visual thought implies a strong link between imagistic representation and acts of fantasy, implying that the nature of daydreaming can be explained via the nature of imagistic representation and vice versa. This, as I shall discuss below, is reinforced by Freud's ample comments on the active role of sensory processes in shaping the manifest content of psychological acts such as dreams, daydreams and hallucinations, all of which distance the individual from reality. In particular, Freud appeals to the fact that sensory forms of mental representation (which are largely visual but can also be auditory) represent ideas in a different manner to linguistic thought (Freud 1915a).

Freud's extensive analysis of the active role of visual processes in shaping the nature and function of dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, taken in conjunction with Varendonck's rich account of their waking counterpart will be essential in drawing out links between visual forms of representation and reality-indifferent processes. Throughout the *Interpretation of Dreams*, for instance, Freud demonstrates how a visual form of representation lends itself naturally to many of the natural quirks of dream processes: for example, two concepts can be pictorially represented within one image creating the effect of condensation (Freud 1900: 334).

The primitive form of mentation that dreams employ involves a formal regression back to an earlier mode of thinking, in which thoughts are unravelled into sensory elements and then believed with the automaticity of an external perception. This, in essence, is a preserved fragment of the infantile wish-fulfilling hallucination in which instinctual needs are represented as being met.

The wish-fulfilling hallucination can be considered the most important theoretical construct for an understanding of the Freudian imagination, as it can be used to explain its motivational force; its *raison d'être*. Before returning to a deeper analysis of how visual forms of representation aid the function of conscious imagination, it is worth beginning with the Freud's theory of this primitive mental act.

### **The Wish-Fulfilling Hallucination as a Blueprint for the Imagination**

Freud's link between the sensory nature of the imagination, its equation with fantasy and its role in insulating the individual from reality are best understood in the context of his theory of the wish –fulfilling hallucination. This psychological act embodies the basic premise of Freud's notion of the pleasure principle: instinctual needs and wishes that are not being met in reality can be momentarily held at bay through the hallucination of their satisfaction (Freud 1895/1950, 1911).

Freud presented a highly in-depth account of the wish-fulfilling hallucination in his unpublished draft *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, another pre-psychoanalytic text which, with the value of hindsight, has arguably become an integral part of understanding his body of work. The detailed account of hallucinatory versus 'reality oriented' thinking that Freud sketches in the project is worth considering in all of its theoretical depth, as it is within the context of this model that it becomes clear how Freud's theory of bodily instincts leads to his conceptualisation of the imagination as an internally generated act which grants expression to instinctual needs. This will provide an important counterpoint for 'mentalizing' accounts of the imagination which arguably is presented as a form of social cognition aimed at knowledge of the interpersonal world.

Although Freud's aim in "The Project" was "to furnish a psychology that will be a natural science" (Freud 1895/1950: 294) and the explanations he grants are largely neurophysiological, two distinct theories of mental representation nevertheless arise which form the backbone of Freud's theory of the primary and secondary processes. The first is the wish-fulfilling hallucination of feeding, the secondary a theory of 'cognition' that is developed in relation to an external world through a rudimentary form of language (Freud 1895/1950). It is here, therefore, that we begin to see substantial links form between mental imagery and a reality-indifferent attitude on the one hand, and language and 'reality oriented' thought on the other.

Freud's intricate neurobiological account of brain functioning in this paper is centred on an early version of his theory of the pleasure principle. He begins by positing a universal biological premise that the aim of any organism is, essentially, to rid itself of 'Q'; a form of neurological energy that causes tension and pain in the organism as it builds. Where simple organisms (such as amoebas) are limited to this basic reflex arc, complex organisms like human infants have the in-built capacity to also develop a sophisticated manner of interacting with their environment (Freud 1895/1950: 296).

'Reality oriented' mental activity only develops once biological needs fail to be met through wishing alone; at the initial stage, the infant has no need to pass beyond a basic model of drive discharge through satisfaction. Freud sketched the architecture of drive discharge as follows: a felt experience of satisfaction passes from the infant's perceptual system (the 'o' system) to another system which is able to register it as a mental experience (the 't' system). Once it reaches this second system, the physical need is registered as met and the endogenous tension (that flowing up to the mind from the body) is released (Freud 1895/1950: 295-306). The

difference between the 'o' and the 't' systems can be seen to pre-empt Freud's later ideas on the distinction between the primary and secondary processes. In the perceptual 'o' system, neurones are 'permeable' making it easy for 'Q' to flow through them uninhibited, whereas in the more sophisticated 't' system neurons are 'impermeable' due to their higher resistance to 'Q' (Freud 1895/1950: 299).

The 'basic satisfaction' format of experience falls down as soon as the infant feels hunger and is not instantly fed; she now has a rising level of Q from endogenous needs and no clear path to release. To deal with her painful hunger the infant performs her first mental act, a wish fulfilling hallucination which repeats the satisfaction she felt during the previous feed. Although the hallucinated experiences must be based on a genuine satisfactory experience, the wish-fulfilling hallucination is not a memory per se, as the infant, at this stage, does not have cognitive capacity to tolerate the representation of the passage of time. Freud believed that the past experience remains available to the infant without the capacity for memory due to a natural quirk of the impermeable 't' neurone system: when neurones that relate to a perception are cathected simultaneously the contact barriers between them are 'facilitated', a process by which their resistance to Q is lowered. This facilitation allows Q to flow more easily between these two neurones than it can through others and the two become linked by association (Freud 1895/1950). When the infant next experiences a desire for the breast, the perceptual image of the breast will become filled with Q ("cathected") at the same time: a hallucination is experienced.

Freud's account here not only shows how wishes can lead to the hallucination of their satisfaction but highlights how desire can set of a chain of associative thinking that operates indifferently to the 'laws' of logic and reality. In "Formulations on Two Principles of Mental Functioning" this pleasure driven mode of functioning gradually

gives way to the Reality Principle, so called because it is a 'reality oriented' form of mental processing in which attention is directed towards incoming sensory data over and above internally generated hallucinations (Freud 1911). His description of the on-set of the Reality Principle makes specific reference to daydreaming, arguing that it preserves the essential qualities of earlier modes of thinking:

With the introduction of the reality principle one species of thought-activity was split off; it was kept free from reality-testing and remained subordinated to the pleasure principle alone. This activity is phantasying, which begins already in children's play, and later, continued as daydreaming, abandons dependence on real objects (Freud 1911:221).

Although this passage can be read as a description of origin of dynamic unconscious processes (which are, in essence, phantasying), Freud also explicitly directs our attention towards acts of conscious daydreaming, singling them out as governed by the pleasure principle. This sets up a clear parallel between the conscious imagination and unconscious processes, a fact which is bolstered by Freud's frequent analysis of daydreams in terms of dreaming.

### **Visual Representation in Dreams and Daydreams**

Freud's comparison between dreams and daydreams arguably presents the richest source in his text for understanding his theory of the imaginative. In this section, I will consider some of his comments on the similarity between dreams and daydreams, including some suggestions drawn from both Freud's work and Johan Varendonck's *The Psychology of Day-Dreams* (a text which Freud, as we saw above, refers to in his analysis of conscious visual thinking in "The Ego and the Id"). In 'Creative Writers

and Daydreaming' Freud begins his analysis of conscious fantasy with the proclamation that:

I cannot pass over the relation of phantasies to dreams. Our dreams at night are nothing else than phantasies like these, as we can demonstrate from the interpretation of dreams (Freud 1907: 148).

One of several passages in the *Interpretation of Dreams* that Freud could be referring to above reads as follows:

Closer investigation of the characteristics of these day-time phantasies shows us how right it is that these formations should bear the same name as we give to the products of our thought during the night - the name, that is, of 'dreams.' They share a large number of their properties with night-dreams, and their investigation might, in fact, have served as the shortest and best approach to an understanding of night-dreams (Freud 1907:148).

It is important to begin by noting a key difference between the dream and the infantile wish-fulfilling hallucinations. The dream, unlike the hallucination, does not have the wished for object as its perceptual content; the wish itself is not represented directly to the dreamer. If a repressed infantile wish were to become conscious during sleep it would cause the ego so much anxiety that the dreamer would wake up. Dreams allow sleep by creating a compromise formation between the ego's desire to repress the wish and the wish's desire to be discharged via representation, therefore expressing wishes in a distorted or disguised form. The distortion occurs by a process Freud coins "dream work" in which ideas are symbolised by other, distantly related associations and important connections are replaced by seemingly trivial ones (Freud 1900:235). The dream work censors unconscious wishes in part

by using “day residue” (sensory impressions from the previous day) to create a somewhat intelligible structure to the dream (Freud 1900). The same applies to day-dreams in arguably a much more marked degree, due to the fact that they occur during waking hours under the watchful eye of the conscious mind.

I will shelve issues concerning dream censorship as they do not bear direct relevance to the current task. The aim, rather, is to examine the psychic consequences of visual representation as a general format, rather than focusing on the particulars of a dream’s content. Freud argues that the visual nature of dreams accounts for several features of dreams that make them bizarre. One side-effect is that dreams are taken as real before the question of belief in them arises: the dream is “believed” with the same unreflective immediacy that external visual perceptions are believed (Freud 1900:535). The linguistic, causal and rational abilities of the secondary process are normally able to mediate these features of visual thought but in the dream they have no influence, meaning that a true regression to the primary process always gains the status of an external perception (Freud 1900:535). The visual hallucination of a scene necessarily brings it into the present, it cannot be experienced as a possible or future scene as in normal day dreaming, where the secondary process influence is felt.

Although daydreaming does not involve a full regression to hallucination, the secondary process influence on imaginative acts is greatly reduced. In *The Psychology of Daydreams* Varendonck argues that this allows them to benefit from imagistic representation in a similar manner to night dreams:

We really see these castles before our mind's eye. We believe because we see.

And the fore-consciousness is not alone in believing what it sees or in wanting to

see before believing. Even Thomas wanted to see before he would recognize Christ. He thereby proved himself to be merely human, a man of simple mind. Not only the simple in mind want to see before they believe. We may even say that simple-minded people believe because they have seen (Varendonck 1921: 145).

On this view, visual representation is a necessary step in wish-fulfilment. We may desire a certain outcome, but we cannot “believe in it” without having some form of perceptual experience to the effect that our desire has come true. Cognitive imagination does not have the same force as visual imagination because it is unable to offer anything in the way of sensory gratification. This could suggest why as adults much of our fantastical thought is imagistic, despite the fact that – unlike the Freudian infant – we have a range of cognitive capacities to employ.

Secondly, Freud’s claim that visual thought cannot express logical connectives is highly similar to the ideas expressed in Varendonck’s *The Psychology of Day-Dreams*. Varendonck developed a theory of the “second self” which is governed by the ‘foreconscious’ mind: a term which aimed to describe part of psychic life which is governed neither by the ‘will’ nor by practical concerns and simply seeks satiation of affective desires (Varendonck 1921: 13-25). One of Varendonck’s strongest observations is that the foreconscious mind is dependent upon visual imagery in a way that the rational, conscious mind is not:

Only after I commenced the present study of fore-conscious thinking did I, to my great surprise, make the discovery that my second self operates distinctly by means of optical images, and I have reasons to think that most persons share this peculiarity with me (Varendonck 1921: 57).



When it comes to the specifics of episodes of visual thinking Freud and Varendonck are therefore in agreement: episodes of thinking in pictures cannot express logical links, including linguistic hypotheticals, which means that any idea expressed visually is expressed as an actuality. This gives visual thoughts a degree of felt reality to the extent that they compete with an individual's attention to actual states of affairs.

From the commentaries here, it is possible to see how visual representation as a form of mental content can aid wish-fulfilment as a psychological aim: by presenting experiential scenes that do not spell out logical connectives, visual thinking provides the perfect arena for 'reality indifferent' thought.

### **'Reality Indifferent' Verbal Thinking**

A strong objection that could be made to the proposed link between reality-indifferent thinking as visual representation is the simple fact that verbal thought itself also has a proven capacity to keep individuals at a distance from the external world. A quick look at an instance of reality-indifferent linguistic thought may therefore help to clarify the issues at hand and help to bring Freud's theory of the nature of reality-indifferent thinking into sharper relief.

One of the most striking exceptions of language becoming actively associated with a disconnection from reality can be found in Freud's theory of schizophrenic speech, in which language comes to exhibit many of the qualities of unconscious processing; forming chains of ideas that are associative and concrete while failing to test that the connections between ideas are even minimally realistic (Freud 1915a: 196-204). In his 1915 paper "The Unconscious" Freud gives the following outline of a schizophrenic female patient seen by a colleague of his:

A patient of Tausk's, a girl who was brought to the clinic, after a quarrel with her lover, complained that her eyes were not right, they were twisted. This she herself explained by bringing forward a series of reproaches against her lover in coherent language. 'She could not understand him at all, he looked different every time; he was a hypocrite, an eye-twister, he had twisted her eyes; now she had twisted eyes; they were not her eyes any more; now she saw the world with different eyes (Freud 1915a: 196-197).

Here we can see the patient forming rapid chains of associations based on an overly literal interpretation of language, including a concrete reading of metaphor (the fact that he lover had deceived her led to the conclusion that he had – in a literal, physical sense - twisted her eyes). The importance of the (false) association of ideas in this example could be seen to highlight the importance of the 'rules' or 'mechanisms' of thought over and above its representational format: the definitive feature of 'schizophrenic language' is the manner in which verbal representations are linked together associatively without reality-testing, not their linguistic nature per se. Yet in Freud's analysis of this case, he seems to suggest this psychotic disorder provide a unique instance where verbal representations behave like non-verbal unconscious processes, contradicting the usual 'laws' of language:

In schizophrenia words are subjected to the same process as that which makes the dream-images out of latent dream-thoughts—to what we have called the primary psychical process. They undergo condensation, and by means of displacement transfer their cathexes to one another in their entirety. The process may go so far that a single word, if it is specially suitable on account of its numerous connections, takes over the representation of a whole train of thought (Freud 1915a:198).

In schizophrenia, therefore, language paradoxically does not behave like language but is governed by processes normally reserved for dreaming and dynamic unconscious. Freud's analysis here is worth considering in juxtaposition with another comment on dream images drawn from the *Interpretation of Dreams*, in which he states:

Dreams, then, think predominantly in visual images - but not exclusively. They make use of auditory images as well, and, to a lesser extent, of impressions belonging to the other senses. Many things, too, occur in dreams (just as they normally do in waking life) simply as thoughts or ideas - probably, that is to say, in the form of residues of verbal presentations. Nevertheless, what are truly characteristic of dreams are only those elements of their content which *behave like images*, which are more like perceptions, that is, than they are like mnemonic presentations (Freud 1900: 49, emphasis added).

This theoretically rich passage simultaneously acknowledges the interchangeability of visual and verbal presentations while maintaining that visual processes have their own inherent properties and a unique internal logic. Thus in psychotic states, just as in dreams, language is characterised by the fact that it behave like an image. As a result, it could be argued that although instances of 'reality indifferent' linguistic thought may initially seem simply like outliers in a picture where verbal thought tends to be 'reality oriented', the fact that Freud accounts for this by positing that in such cases verbal thought acts as though it were imagistic can be seen to reinforce the idea that visual representations are inherently indifferent to reality and thus ill-suited to 'reality oriented' thought. Rather than claiming, as a brute fact, that Freud saw visual thinking as pulling the individual away from reality, it therefore may be more apt to conclude that mental imagery is a prime example of 'reality indifferent' thought.

Indeed, Freud's theory of the primary process, which governs the unconscious mind, could be aptly summed up as thinking which behaves like imagery without necessarily being imagery. We saw above in the discussion of aphasia and hysteria how, historically, the primary process grew out of Freud's pathologisation of the visual imagination generally until it came to take its place in his metapsychology: leaving Freud's theory of the imagination not only loosely associated with psychopathology but, it can be argued, cast aside and theoretically underdeveloped as a mental process in general.

### **'Behaving like Language': Freud's Theory of the Secondary Process**

A discussion on the role of language in Freudian theory is an essential part of understanding his theory of the visual imagination. After all, it is Freud's assertion that human consciousness is linguistic which excludes imagistic thought from the 'conscious' mind and renders it an enigmatic player in the psychic sphere. But why did Freud believe that linguistic thought is inherently more realistic than visual thought? The reason is not clear cut: at times Freud appears to champion verbal thought for its important role in the clinical practice of psychoanalysis, with repression lifting as soon as unconscious ideas are expressed in speech with the appropriate accompanying affect (Breuer & Freud 1895, Rizzuto 2015). At others, especially in the context of his writings on development, he constructs a more overtly theoretical framework for language in which linguistic concepts and perception must interact in order to make the apprehension of external reality possible (Freud 1895/1950, Livingstone-Smith 1999 87-88). Both views can be seen to pathologise the imagination.

Once again, we may return to his early work on the Project to fully understand this link between linguistic thought and 'reality oriented' thought, in which he explains

in great detail how the infant uses language-like thought processes to link together perceptions of reality in a realistic rather than simply associative manner. It is first necessary return to the narrative of the hungry infant who is attempting to satiate her desires through perceptual hallucinations. In order to break the pleasure-unpleasure cycle the infant must inhibit the easy flow of Q between the desire and hallucination so that wishful act of imagination may be replaced by the veridical perception of actual external states of affairs. This repositioning of attention onto the external world requires an “indication of reality”, which allows the infant to begin to recognise that the real world does not mirror the wishful hallucination (Freud 1895/1950: 326).

The painful “remembering” of failed attempts at satisfaction through hallucination prompts the growth of the ego, a mental entity defined by Freud (at this stage of his work) as the total sum of all of the permanently cathected neurones that are able to inhibit the flow of Q so that the infant need not repeat a painful experience. The infant uses the ego’s ability to redirect Q to help her find drive satisfaction in reality rather than hallucination. After blocking the direct path between desire and hallucination, the function of the ego is to match the image of the desired object with a real one through experimentation in her environment and in this way establish a more secure path from wish to fulfilment. The ego expects to find a matching perceptual image to the desired object that comes from the sense organs; when the perception tallies with the expected image, Q can be safely discharged. Thinking is active when the indications of reality coming from the outside do not match the mental image of the desired object and attention continues to guide perception. Thinking ends when the infant’s need is met (Freud 1895/1950: 326).

In order to cognise the array of differing information coming from the environment the ego forms a new kind of representation: a predicate. This allows the

infant to understand the changing attributes of an object without having to treat each change as a new object entirely. Freud does this by ascribing different mental functions to different parts of the psyche: the part of the mind which lies external to the ego (not yet conceptualised as id and super-ego) understands the object as a physical thing whose parts stay together, whereas the ego is able to understand the thing along with its changing activities and properties (Freud 1895/1950:327 -333).

The predicate is cognised via a “speech-presentation”, which allows the infant to understand both their environment and themselves by linking the “thing” with its “attribute”. Through hearing their own scream at times of unpleasure the infant links the two together and begins to understand her own screams as a signal of bodily pain. She will also be able to link it to a perceptual image of the withholding or absent caregiver. While the infant will not yet be able to reason that she is suffering because of an absent care-giver, as association is established between the self and environment that allows it to be characterised in a certain light that will carry over to future experiences. These associations will build, so in later development the infant will not only link their own cries with feelings of unpleasure but will also be able to understand that the benevolent and absent caregiver is in fact that same “thing” through repeated exposure to their identical physical characteristics:

Let us suppose that the object which furnishes the perception resembles the subject-a fellow human-being. If so, the theoretical interest [taken in it] is also explained by the fact that an object like this was simultaneously the [subject's] first satisfying object and further his first hostile object, as well as his sole helping power. For this reason it is in relation to a fellow human-being that a human-being learns to cognize (Freud, 1985/1950: 331).

This process of linking is what makes up the part of secondary processes that Freud terms “judgment” or “cognition”. It is the part of the secondary that is most intimately connected with linguistic ability; it is only through bringing a range of associations under one word that they can be united and understood as objects. Although intricate, Freud’s careful portrayal of the growth of language in tandem with ‘reality oriented’ mental activity can help us see why he came to view it as the mode of representation characteristic of the Reality Principle: language allows us to tie experiences together in a manner which creates a unified and realistic experience. In this sense, Freud has been deemed with adopting the philosophical outlook of Immanuel Kant who famously acknowledged that humans must have the capacity to unify experiences through the application of concepts (Brook 2003). In the following chapter, I will turn to the relationship between Freud and Kant in more depth.

### **Two Further Considerations: Sublimation and the Death Drive**

Before concluding this reading of the Freudian imagination, there are two potential objections that it will be necessary to deal with. Although space will not permit a satisfactory review of either, it will be worth outlining them briefly and demonstrating why they do not necessarily pose a threat to the reading of Freud’s theory of the imagination which I have presented over the course of this chapter. The first objection is the role of the death drive in psychic life: so far, and also in the chapter to follow, I have linked Freud’s theory of the imagination with Freud’s portrait of the mind as a pleasure-seeking entity. Yet Freudian theory underwent a significant paradigm shift with the publication of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in which he notoriously introduced the ‘death drive’: a negative psychic force which aims to reduce the tension in the organism and return it to an inert state (Freud 1920). This raises the question of how a ‘pleasure principle’ reading of the Freudian imagination

can be rendered consistent with his later works. There are two points worth noting quickly in relation to this: firstly, although the 'death drive' works against the idea that pleasure is the sole driving force when pleasure is linked with the appetitive forward looking quality of the 'life drive', Freud's notion of 'death drive' can nonetheless be seen to preserve his key insight from the Project that pleasure is equal to the discharge of psychic tension (Freud 1895/1950). Defined as such, all psychic activity remains geared towards pleasure in so far as it aims for energetic release. While such a reading may iron out many subtleties in Freud's works, it will suffice for the current argument as it retains a strong contrast between Freud's approach and those which place the imagination at the heart of psychic health (e.g. Bateman & Fonagy 2010). More importantly, the conclusions that Freud drew in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* did not seem to impact his theories of daydreaming and the imagination. This is noteworthy, as Freud's formulation of the 'death drive' was inspired in part by existence of traumatic dreams which did not fit into his theory that all dreams express disguised wish-fulfilments (Freud 1920: 13-14). As we have seen throughout this chapter, Freud's theory of the imagination was strongly drawn from his ideas about dreaming, yet he did not revise his account of daydreams in light of the developments presented in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. There are a couple of potential reasons for this. Firstly, it is possible that daydreams simply remain under the sway of the pleasure principle though the entirety of psychic life, entailing that Freud's theory of the imagination can be read in terms of his earlier theories. Perhaps more likely, however, is that Freud simply did not bestow enough importance upon the conscious imagination to systematically reform his theories in light of his own developments. As I have aimed to show throughout this chapter, Freud did not only bestow a pathological character upon the imagination, but failed



to formulate a structural position for it in his otherwise highly systematic accounts of mental functioning. While the impact of the 'death drive' on Freud's theories of conscious imagination and daydreaming would be an interesting line of further research, pursuing it here is not necessary within the confines of the current argument.

Another potential objection to the reading of Freud which I have presented here, in which the imagination is a force which insulates the individual from external reality, is the positive role granted to imaginative acts via sublimation (Freud 1914). In "On Narcissism: An Introduction" Freud defines sublimation as follows:

Sublimation is a process that concerns object-libido and consists in the instinct's directing itself towards an aim other than, and remote from, that of sexual satisfaction; in this process the accent falls upon the deflection from sexuality. (Freud 1914: 94).

Freud did not consider himself a creative type but despite this (or perhaps, indeed, as a cause of it) he had a lifelong fascination with art, artists and the creative process, penning no less than 22 papers on the subject in his lifetime ( see, for example, Freud 1908, 1910, 1927/1928). As noted by Lionel Trilling in his Freud Anniversary Lecture "For Freud there is an honorific accent in the use of the word culture, but at the same time, as we cannot fail to hear, there is in what he says about culture an unfailing note of exasperation and resistance" (Trilling 1995 quoted in Winnicott 1971/2005:223). Freud potentially had difficulty in carving out a place for artistic pursuits for the same reason he failed to grant the mental image a structural place in his metapsychology: art exists in a psychological space that Freud found hard to assimilate with his general philosophy of human nature; a view which, as we

have seen, tends to pathologise that which is internally generated<sup>9</sup>. In his analysis of Leonardo Da Vinci, he even resigned himself to the fact that “Since artistic talent and capacity are intimately connected with sublimation we must admit that the nature of the artistic function is also inaccessible to us along psycho-analytic lines” (Freud 1910: 136).

Despite these reservations, Freud believed that acts of sublimation have the ability to bridge the gap between internal pathology and external achievement through the creation of something tangible (Freud 1910). Although this does provide the imagination, in a sense, with a positive aim within the Freudian paradigm, it does not offer a strong challenge to the view of Freud I have presented here, nor does it allow for the Freudian imagination to be ‘reality oriented’. Freud tended to explicitly link acts of sublimation to artistic and intellectual achievements whereas the view of ‘reality oriented’ imagination, as we shall see, adopts a more general approach to creativity which includes a distinctly social focus (Fonagy et. al 2002). In this sense, ‘reality oriented’ imagining is ‘creative’ according to Winnicott’s unique use of the term, on which he says: “I am hoping that the reader will accept a general reference to creativity, not letting the word get lost in the successful or acclaimed creation but keeping it to the meaning that refers to a colouring of the whole attitude to external reality” (Winnicott 1971/2005: 87). Moreover, while Freud argued that the creation of artistic works is a means through which one can glean some benefit - dredging it out of the internal world into an external, public arena - he nevertheless presents sublimation as the capacity to make the best of an ultimately negative psychic force.

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<sup>9</sup> This deficit, it can be argued, was noticed by Donald Winnicott in “the Location of Cultural Experience” when he claims that “Freud used the word “sublimation” to point the way to a place where cultural experience is meaningful, but perhaps he did not get so far as to tell us where in the mind cultural experience is” (Winnicott 1971/2005: 128)

While sublimation can bend the imagination towards the external world, it remains far from 'reality oriented' imagining which, as we shall see later on is form of conscious experience which opens reality out to the individual. Neither 'sublimation' nor the 'death drive' can therefore be seen to advance pertinent objections to the reading of Freud presented here.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter I have advanced a reading of Freud's theory of the imagination as force which insulates the individual from the world, capitalising on its sensory dimension in order to offer pseudo-gratification for unconscious wishes and their derivatives. I traced the development of Freud's theory of the visual imagination from his pre-psychoanalytic work through to his metapsychological papers with the aim of demonstrating how his early theories of visual thought as the pathological form of representation gave way to the primary processes, leaving no structural position for conscious acts of imagining in Freud's topographical model. The Freudian imagination nevertheless retains strong ties with primary process thinking, and can be considered a sophisticated elaboration of the wish-fulfilling hallucination. Above all, this leads to a picture of imaginative processes as distracting, distancing and insulating the individual from external reality. Now that a reading of the Freudian imagination has been laid out, I will turn to offering some context to it through a comparison between Freud's theories and philosophical writings on imagining.



## **Chapter Two**

### **The Temptations of Dualism: Contextualising Freud's Theory of the Imagination**

*"If the present speaker had to choose among the views of the philosopher, he could characterize himself as a dualist. No monism succeeds in doing away with the distinction between ideas and the objects they represent"*

-Sigmund Freud (Minutes IV (11Dec 1912): 11) quoted in Forrester, J. (1980: 25)

*"Dignity never goes without weakness; thoughts never go without images"*

- Jean Paul Sartre (1936:31)

The previous chapter aimed to capture Freud's theory of the imaginative through a survey of his metapsychological texts, with a particular emphasis on his juxtaposition of the verbal and imagistic forms of representation (Freud 1915a, 1923). I argued that daydreams<sup>10</sup> are presented within Freud's works as a visual expression of the internal world; a piece of psychic reality brought to life in a 'private theatre' (Breuer & Freud 1895:22). As such, their aim is not to bring the individual into contact with external reality but to provide an experientially infused representational format for instinctual wishes in a vain attempt at cathartic release (Freud 1907: 146-147). Where the imagination is granted a productive role, this is only in a limited sense through its links with sublimation and child's play in which fantasies can be used to master the drive in a realistic manner (Freud 1914).

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<sup>10</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, an interesting feature of Freud's account of the imagination is that he does not differentiate between acts of imagination, daydreaming and fantasy in the way that a modern reader may.

The ultimate aim of this thesis is to offer an alternative reading of the role of the imagination in psychoanalytic theory of mind. According to the view I am proposing, we can see the imagination<sup>11</sup> as inherently geared towards reality, rather than inherently indifferent to it. For the imagination to function thus, I will argue, we need to appreciate that it has an often unrecognised epistemological dimension (see ed. Kind. & Kung. 2016). When it functions well, the imagination serves to open up both internal and external reality to us in a richer and more subtle form than straightforward veridical perception (Lennon 2015), when it functions pathologically this is largely in response to deep seated *epistemic* anxieties (Hopkins 2016). The mentalization model, on which I am largely basing my account of the ‘reality oriented’ imagination also forges links between the capacity for the imaginative representation of mental states (belonging to both self and other) and a felt sense of self and agency (Fonagy et. al. 2002, Fonagy & Luyten 2009). As we shall see later in this thesis (see in particular Chapters Five and Six), failures in mentalizing of various degrees can lead to an impoverished experience of a coherent self who is able to act as an active agent in her environment (Fonagy et. al. 2002 203- 253).

Before we turn to outlining some major shifts in psychoanalytic theory that have, arguably, created prime conditions for a theory of the ‘reality oriented’ imagination to emerge, it is important obtain a richer understanding of Freud’s thoughts on the

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<sup>11</sup> It is worth reiterating a point discussed at some length in the introduction: my aim in this thesis is not to ring-fence the term ‘imagination’ for a particular form of psychological experience, or to imply that certain psychological experiences are more worthy of the name ‘the imagination’ than others. Furthermore, it is not my intention to claim psychological experiences that Freud refers to as ‘imaginative’ (such as daydreams and conscious acts of reverie) do not occur and have a significant impact upon the individual experiencing them. Rather, I hope to draw out one way of conceptualising the imagination which I believe has not been made explicit in psychoanalytic theory, despite the fact that advances in the field suggest that it is integral to a sound understanding of psychopathology. This will be referred to specifically as the ‘*reality oriented*’ imagination throughout the thesis.

matter. Where does Freud's theory of the image come from? Why does it have different properties to conscious 'thought'? What about mental imagery makes it suited to 'reality indifferent' thinking? Although the previous chapter offered answers to these questions, they were answers that were internal to the Freudian paradigm. While we may appreciate that Freud's pathologisation of the image might stem from his early 'cathartic' method used with his hysterical patients (Breuer & Freud 1895), or that his focus on dreams as a gateway to the study of primary processes may have tightened the link between visuality and unconscious processes (Freud 1900), these observations alone do not tell us why Freud believed that mental imagery has the qualities that it does. Even Varendonck's in-depth study of the image claimed to glean its properties through introspection, rather than a conceptual analysis (Varendonck 1921).

It can be considered somewhat fruitless to search Freud's texts themselves for an answer to this question as he was often highly preoccupied with establishing psychoanalysis' base as a positivistic science; keen to present his findings as though they were the result of a sound empirical investigation (e.g. Sulloway 1979, Tauber 2010). But, as Marcia Cavell succinctly put it: "no psychology which treats mental states as mental states can be a science in the sense that Freud claimed for psychoanalysis" (Cavell 1993: 57). In other words, if the psychological nature of mental states is to be preserved, their psychological nature cannot be 'explained away' by reference to the 'mind-less' biology underlying them. Cavell's assertion also points to the fact that mental representations (whether they be imagistic, linguistic or something else entirely) are unobservable entities whose existence must be inferred. The qualities we assign mental representations cannot, be the result of an objective, third-person empirical investigation: one cannot look at mental representations

through a microscope. Freud must therefore have had prior assumptions about the nature of mental imagery; preconceptions that he brought to bear on his metapsychological formulations. As a result, philosophical texts on the image which deal directly with these assumptions have the potential to grant an illuminating context for a reading of the Freudian imagination. This does not, of course, entail that Freudian theory *itself* should be read as philosophy but merely points to areas in which philosophical concepts may be used as ‘tools’ to clarify complex theoretical postulates in his works. Moreover although Freud seems to adopt a similar theory of the imagination to dualist philosophers, this should not be taken as evidence that Freudian metapsychology is reliant on a dualist metaphysics. Freudian theory has been noted for its deep philosophical inconsistencies and does not seem to reliably adhere to one philosophical stance on the relation between the mind and body (Livingstone-Smith 1999). However, throughout this chapter I will argue that Freud seems to employ a form of representational dualism in which imagination and conceptual thought are seen as *different in kind*. It is worth noting at this stage that the ‘predictive processing’ models which underpin ‘reality oriented’ imagining do not uphold a form of representational dualism, and in fact support the notion that all forms of mental activity stem from the core activity of generating predictive sensory models (Clark 2015, Hopkins 2015). It could therefore be argued that a further attraction of the ‘predictive processing’ model of mind is that it does not rest on outmoded philosophical assumptions but is compatible with a range of contemporary positions from within both philosophy and neuroscience

### **The ‘Problem of the Image’**

As we saw in the previous chapter, teasing out Freud’s theory of the visual imagination is not straightforward. Neither visual representation nor conscious



daydreams can be easily assimilated into Freud's topography of the primary and secondary processes, even when these are conceptualised as a sliding scale rather than as binary categories. Mental imagery is one of only two exceptions that Freud gives to his general rule that human consciousness is linguistic (see Freud 1923: 14). As the other is affect (Freud 1915a: 177-180), visual thought is the only exception to this rule with an inherently representational character. Unlike language, which Freud affords a definite structural position as the representational vehicle of conscious thought, mental images are presented as neither part of the conscious nor unconscious minds. In contrast to other forms of non-verbal representation, such as a conversion hysteria, an act of visual thought does not achieve the status of psychopathology, yet Freud nevertheless states that it is incapable of reaching the level of 'full' consciousness which, in turn, involves the ability to make connections between ideas (Freud 1923: 14).

Freud's placement of mental imagery 'outside' the standard metapsychological framework has conceptual similarities with a widespread tendency in early modern psychology that was identified by Jean Paul Sartre in one of his earliest philosophical works "The Imagination" (1936)<sup>12</sup>. In terms resonant with Freud's contrast between 'word' and 'thing' presentations, Sartre argues that philosophers of the early modern period cast the mental image as a 'thing': inert and causally determined, comparable to a passively received sensation and therefore different in kind to the activity of thought (Sartre 1936/2012: 20). He argues that the manner in which a philosophical model characterises the interaction between imagery and 'thought' is indicative of the fundamental metaphysical commitments it embodies. As he summarises:

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<sup>12</sup> Not to be confused with his far more famous work "The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination" which he published a few years later (Sartre 1940/2004).

In these three solutions, the image remains an identical structure. It remains a thing. Only its relations to thought change according to the point of view that one has taken on the relations of man to the world, of the universal to the particular, of existence-as-object to existence-as-representation, of the soul to the body. (Sartre 1936/2012: 20).

Sartre's analysis is particularly striking because he shows that philosophers who otherwise adhere to radically different worldviews, such as empiricists and rationalists, nevertheless use the same strategy in regards to the mental image: they characterise it as an entity which has more in common with the natural world than with the rational mind. As a result, imagination is not part of 'thinking' but a force that assails it from the outside.

Sartre's insight can be used to demonstrate that Freud's theory of the imagination as a 'low' form of thought is overdetermined. Below, I will show that Freud can be seen to pathologise the image through two routes: by adopting an associationist theory of perception as from an empirical standpoint and from implicitly adopting a dualist stance which opposes rational 'thought' with imagination in his later works.

### **Perception and Imagination**

One of the philosophical issues that is most pertinent to the current analysis is the relationship between imagination and perception. In terms of his metapsychological theory, Freud seems to set up a contention between them (e.g. Freud 1911). The hungry young infant, after all, is forced to choose between letting her attention be taken over by imagined satisfaction and directing it to her perceptual experience of the external environment (Freud 1895/1950). This general set up goes on to inform

Freud's portrayal of the imagination in mature adult life: although he adopted the term 'imagination' in a rather general way, the species of imaginative activity that Freud paid the most attention to was fantastical daydreaming, which he characterized as instances of unconscious processes rising into awareness in the form of semi-structured visual scenes (Freud 1907). On the other hand, Freud implicitly recognised the possibility that unconscious, imaginative forces might hijack an otherwise veridical perceptual experience of external reality, an insight which crystallizes in his theories of transference (and countertransference) (Freud 1909b, 1912). Freudian transference is a targeted a form of psychological experience in which one's perceptual experience of another becomes infused with imaginative (or, more technically, 'phantastic') elements with the result that the one experiences a current figure (typically the analyst) as though they were an important figure from one's past (Freud 1912). One of the most notorious reports of transference phenomena occurred in Freud's treatment of the 'Rat Man' (1909b). In the case notes for one of his sessions with this patient, Freud describes how his patient 'transfers' an unconscious fear of his father onto Freud himself:

Things soon reached a point at which, in his dreams, his waking phantasies, and his associations, he began heaping the grossest and filthiest abuse upon me and my family, though in his deliberate actions he never treated me with anything but the greatest respect. His demeanour as he repeated these insults to me was that of a man in despair. 'How can a gentleman like you, sir,' he used to ask, 'let yourself be abused in this way by a low, good-for-nothing fellow like me? You ought to turn me out: that's all I deserve.' While he talked like this, he would get up from the sofa and roam about the room,—a habit which he explained at first as being due to delicacy of feeling: he could not bring himself,

he said, to utter such horrible things while he was lying there so comfortably. But soon he himself found a more cogent explanation, namely, that he was avoiding my proximity for fear of my giving him a beating. If he stayed on the sofa he behaved like some one in desperate terror trying to save himself from castigations of terrific violence; he would bury his head in his hands, cover his face with his arm, jump up suddenly and rush away, his features distorted with pain, and so on. He recalled that his father had had a passionate temper, and sometimes in his violence had not known where to stop. (Freud 1909b: 209).

In this instance, the Rat Man's experience of Freud *in external reality* is infused with unconscious phantasy, dissolving the clean-cut division between internally focused imagination and externally focused perception that is set up in elsewhere in Freud's writings.

How can Freud's theory of transference be accommodated within the reading of the Freudian imagination given in the previous chapter? Clearly, both daydreaming and 'misinterpretations' of external reality are phenomena which are of great interest to the psychoanalyst which demand clear explanatory frameworks. Both can also, in a broad sense, be classed as imaginative in so far as they add something to experience which is not *given* in sensory perception. However, the influence of imaginative processes in 'transference' points to an alternate view of the relationship between the imagination and perception, one which has arguably grown far more dominant since Freud's time, in which the two are understood as existing along a continuum (Merleau-Ponty 1968). From this point of view perception always contains imaginative elements: it is simply a matter of degree<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Despite the fact that this position allows the individual to gear their attention towards external reality while remaining in a *state of imagining*, this is far from a case of 'reality

The case of transference does not pose as much of a problem for interpreting Freud's theory of the imaginative as it may initially seem. Following Jean Schimek (1975), I will argue that Freud adopts an implicit theory of perception as the straightforward registration of sense data that is free from imaginative influence. When imaginative distortions do occur, such as in the Rat Man's experience of Freud, these are attributed to unconscious processes hijacking perception as though from the outside. This view is at odds with dominant views in contemporary neuroscience which state that perception is inherently and constantly subject to distortion, not because it is being taken over by a process that is external to perception, but as an intrinsic part of its nature (Clark 2016; Raftopoulos 2009) . Although in both cases there is a potential for perception to contain imaginative elements, the difference between the two is of great importance for consideration of the 'reality oriented' imagination. Firstly, Freud leaves space, if only as a theoretical 'ideal fiction' (Freud 1937: 235), for perception to be the simple registration of objects in the external environment<sup>14</sup>. It is no surprise, therefore, that when imaginative elements are drawn in they have the effect of drawing the individual away from external reality. Contemporary theories also reject the notion that perception is the passive registration of sense data, although in their case 'imaginative' elements are brought in as a means of unifying and predicting a perceptual scene, with the paradoxical effect that brings them as close to external reality as possible (Clark 2016; Hopkins 2012). In Chapter Four, I will outline this model of perception (which is

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oriented' imagining. As I will outline throughout this thesis, one of the key features of the 'reality oriented' imagination is that it motivated by a sense of openness and curiosity about the external world. Where it generates aspects of experience from within itself, these are concerned with providing a felt sense of self and agency.

<sup>14</sup> The same could be said of conscious thought. Freud seemed to take the human capacity for rational thought for granted and did not construe it as a developmental achievement (See Schimek 1975).

known as the ‘Bayesian Brain’ (Friston 2012; Hopkins 2012, 2016)) in greater depth and draw out how it underpins a view of imaginative functioning, in both its healthy and pathological forms, as bound up with epistemological concerns. In this chapter, I will simply aim to show how Freud’s portrayal of the imagination as inherently indifferent to reality can be better understood by reading it alongside philosophical works which assert a notional difference between perception, imagination and thought respectively.

One of the most pressing objections to the reading of Freud that I will present is his frequent mentions of Kantian philosophy. Kant famously asserted that all perception requires imagination in order to present humans with a unified perceptual scene that is situated in space and time (Kant 1781/1900/2007). Freud demonstrated a keen awareness of Kantian principles and often drew on them, establishing both the unconscious and psychoanalysis’ base as an empirical science (Freud 1915a, 1915b). This establishes a potential continuum between Freud’s view and contemporary neuroscience: neuroscientific models that construe perceptual experience as predictive, such as the Bayesian Brain are founded on a Kantian legacy (Friston 2012; Hopkins 2012).

Pioneering neuroscientists such as Hermann von Helmholtz and Theodore Meynert adopted Kantian principles as a starting point from which to describe brain processes that inform perception (Hopkins 2012; Makari 2008). Freud would have been well aware of these approaches as he was influenced by both Helmholtz’s and Meynert’s work (Hopkins 2012). Furthermore, George Makari has suggested that Freud’s knowledge of ‘active perception’ can be used to explain his developments of constructs such as transference (Makari 1994).

How can Schimek's reading of Freud's theory of perception be maintained in the face of these Kantian influences? I will deal with this objection by suggesting that, while Freud's work is certainly consistent with the notion of 'active perception' (as evidenced by constructs such as transference), his own references to Kant appear to adopt a properly *metaphysical* interpretation of Kant (Tauber 2010). Freud uses Kant to theorize about the unknowability of certain experiences (notably unconscious processes) (Freud 1915a: 171) and to speculate about the role of legislative science (Freud 1915b: 117). So while Freud was certainly aware of evidence which suggested that perception was not the straightforward registration of sense data, he arguably did not carry this insight forward in the same manner as it has been done in contemporary models such as neuropsychanalysis and attachment theory (e.g. Rees in Fotopoulou ed. 2012). As we shall see in some depth in Chapter Four the active nature of perception can be understood as driven by the brain's need to *predict* (Clark 2016; Raftopolous 2009). It is through this view of perception that an epistemological dimension is introduced and a picture of the internal world as strategic emerges. Yet these issues, as we have seen in the previous chapter, are not defining features of Freud's work. As Schimek has argued, discussing Freud's implicit conceptualization of 'external reality':

The reality referred to is not an absolute one, but is conditioned by the nature of the sensory apparatus of the human organism (involving some scaling down of the intensity of external stimuli by a 'stimulus barrier'). But this epistemological Kantian position is not extended to a psychological level, namely the relativity of reality to the developmental stage and motivational state of the perceiver (Schimek 1975: 172).

While Freud may sympathise with Kant's metaphysical position (and at times even exploit it in the name of classifying psychoanalysis as a natural science) he does not frame the inherent unknowability of the world as a quotidian problem for the individual or a relevant factor in unconscious motivational forces. This is in direct contrast to the theoretical models that I will use as a basis for my conceptualization of the 'reality oriented' imagination, which construes mental activity largely arising out of the organisms need to predict its environment via representation (see Chapter Four).

Freud's scattered references to Kant are debatably better interpreted in another way. Sticking close to the aims of Kant himself, Freud appears to be seeking a framework which can incorporate free and rational thought within a world of natural causes. Following Alfred Tauber (2010), I will aim to show that Freud's appeal to Kantian metaphysics is felt most in the clinical situation, in which Freud implicitly adopts a model of psychological 'freedom' that depends on the rational capacity to understand events in terms of their causes (Tauber 2010). I will end this chapter by briefly sketching out readings of Freud which have emphasised this Kantian theme in his work (e.g. Brook 2003, Tauber 2010), as it simultaneously reinforces the 'pathology' of the visual imagination (which I have argued adopts imagistic representations as a means of *avoiding* the representation of realistic cause-and-effect explanations) and grants an interesting point of contrast for the notion of 'psychological freedom' that will be attributed to the 'reality oriented' imagination later in this work.

### **Freud's Theory of Perception**

As we have seen in the discussion above, Jean Schimeck argues that Freud implicitly adopts a theory of perception in which the individual has straightforward,



unmediated access to objects in the external world. Now that Freud's theory of perception has been introduced in the context of the perception-imagination debate, it will be useful to consider it in more depth. Drawing in particular on Freud's comments on the perceptual system in "Formulations on Two Principles of Mental Functioning" (Freud 1911) and "The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis" (Freud 1924b) Schimek reconstructs Freud's theory of the pathway between perception and mental representation as follows:

In brief, Freud's theory of cognition implies a three-stage process: first, objective perceptions and memory images; second, their distortion through the discharge tendency of drives (mobile cathexis, primary process); and third, the partial undoing and restraining of this distorting process, in the service of adaptation to reality (bound cathexis, secondary process). Stage one, of course, does not exist as a distinct developmental stage but is merely the assumed cognitive input for stages two and three (Schimek 1975: 174).

As described in the 'Rat Man' example above, this process entails that 'objective' perception is the default state which then becomes interfered with by unconscious processes, resulting in phenomena such as transference (Freud 1909, 1912). In order to bring thought and perception back in line with reality, associative paths of distortion must be delayed. As Schimek explains:

In short, Freud does not question a theory of cognition which takes for granted, from the start, the capacity for objective, veridical perceptions and their automatic storage as undistorted memory contents. How could such a theory serve as the basis for an approach which focuses on the subjective, irrational, drive-dominated aspects of mental functioning, on the work and struggle to

separate wishful fantasy from reality? The answer is clear and familiar: by assuming that the distortions of initially objective and impersonal contents are the result of motivational factors, of wishful thinking, of drives and their inherent discharge tendency (pleasure principle) (Schimek 1975: 173).

In adopting this model of perception, Schimek argues, Freud was simply falling in line with the dominant associationist model of perception that was dominant during the nineteenth century (Makari 2008, Sartre 1936/2012). This model, based on the empirical and materialist philosophy of David Hume (1739/1985, 1777/1977), was appealing during the time which Freud was working, as George Makari has summarised:

Associationalism held great advantages for a scientific psychology, for it did not speak of the soul or insist on hypothetical faculties that in the end often seemed arbitrary. Instead, this theoretically minimal tool allowed for a close analysis of the fleeting currents of inner experience (Makari 2008: 13).

Hume, as an empiricist, operated at the opposite end of the philosophical spectrum to rationalist philosophers such as Rene Descartes (discussed below) who were keen to draw sharp conceptual distinctions between rational thought and sensory experience. Indeed, Hume's associationist philosophy of psychology entailed the inherent arationality of the mind, demonstrating how seemingly rational connections between ideas were in fact no more than connections drawn from habitually experiencing two (or more) ideas congruently. As he says:

Whenever any object is presented to the memory or senses, it immediately, by the force of custom, carries the imagination to conceive that object which is usually conjoined to it. (Hume 1777: 31).

Whether or not Freud was acquainted directly with Hume's philosophical writings, he would have been suitably immersed in the language and principles of associationism as it formed one of the major doctrines of empirical psychology during the time that he was working. In *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud demonstrates how the same associative mechanism governs the formation of symptoms by linking affect associatively with streams of sense impressions:

Every sense-perception calls back into consciousness any other sense-perception that appeared originally at the same time. (Cf. the text-book example of the visual image of a sheep and the sound of its bleating, etc.) If the original affect was accompanied by a vivid sense-impression, the latter is called up once more when the affect is repeated; and since it is a question of discharging excessively great excitation, the sense-impression emerges, not as a recollection, but as a hallucination (Breuer & Freud 1895: 208).

In later papers, Freud adopts the same associationism in describing the operation of the primary process in the system unconscious, where chains of ideas form associatively through the mechanisms of 'condensation' and 'displacement' connecting ideas that have a circumstantial link or affective resonance with one another. We see this manifesting in the famous example of Little Hans, whose phobia of horses was formed through the unconscious association between horses and Hans' father (see Freud 1909a). Based on these examples, it is possible to conclude that the primary processes mirror the structure of perception in so far as they consist of the associative connection of images, yet their content, rather than being *given in experience* is generated by the unconscious and, as a result, unrealistic.

How does the Freudian imagination fit into the Schimek's reading of Freud? As we saw in the previous chapter, conscious acts of imagination draw on primary process structures to a greater extent than secondary process 'thought' but cannot be equated with them; while they follow a general 'associative' logic, daydreamed scenarios are clearly more than a string of associated images (often involving, for instance, a rudimentary form of plot) (Freud 1907).

There is nothing in Freud's writings to suggest that his work is incompatible with Humean philosophy on a metaphysical level; in fact the two share an ostensible enthusiasm for empiricism and materialism that makes them natural allies. Yet the purpose of the argument presented in this chapter is not to align Freudian theory as a whole with a philosophy of mind, but to use philosophical insight to investigate why Freud 'projects' certain qualities onto the image in a manner that it prevents it from being a vehicle for knowledge. While the associationist theory of mind captures the character of both the image and the unconscious it does not seem fitting to interpret Freud's concept of mind as associationist *simpliciter*. Hume, along with those who adopted his principles in empirical psychology, did not believe that there is an *aspect* of mental functioning that is associative, but that mental activity is governed by associative principles *in its entirety* (Hume 1777/1997).

For the purposes of drawing out the sui generis nature of the imagination in Freud's works, therefore, an in depth comparison with Humean philosophy is not especially useful as it fails to grasp the *difference in kind* between primary process and secondary process thought that creates a dynamic tension between the imaginative and 'reality oriented' aspects of mental experience. One of the means by which Freud manages to create a mind through which one form of thinking structures and controls the other is precisely by granting language a series of properties that

non-linguistic thought does not have (Freud 1915a, Freud 1923). As a result of its non-linguistic character, the most interesting features of the Freudian imagination for the current discussion are its negative qualities: how it *fails*, and what it *lacks*. In order to clarify Freud's claim that the image lies outside the system conscious, I will turn to alternative philosophical approaches. The Freudian account of the imagination can be seen to resonate more deeply with dualist philosophical models which characterise imaginative processes as an intermediary between bodily sensation and the 'thinking' mind (e.g. Descartes 1641/1924). These approaches tend to cast the imagination as a species of perception that is anchored to the physical body in a way that 'thinking', a primarily mental activity, is not (Sartre 1936/2012). On this basis, they deny it many of properties that are considered unique to a human 'thought' or 'intellection'. The most relevant of these for the current discussion is the ability for the imagination to act as a vehicle for knowledge.

### **Freud and Dualism**

First, it will be useful to provide some context. 'Dualism' is a somewhat general term that does not refer to any one philosophical position but invokes a wide range of views spanning centuries of philosophical scholarship. Dualist positions share the common belief that the mind and the body have different properties, whether this is because they are in fact different substances (e.g. Descartes 1641/1924) or simply that from our limited, human point of view they seem to operate differently (e.g. Hasker 2003). Freudian psychoanalysis has been considered open to similarities with this approach as his concept of personhood includes *both* a biological, psychically determined unconscious and a rational ego that can freely bring about change in the mind (Tauber 2010). In light of this, comparisons have been made between Freud and Descartes, Kant and Spinoza (among others) (e.g. Brook 2003,

Tauber 2010)<sup>15</sup>. In what follows, I will suggest that Freud's theory of imagery and imagination should be considered within the context of his juxtaposition between conscious 'thought' and the natural, biological world: a space which includes the external world, the five senses, the body, the imagination, and (for Freud in particular) the unconscious mind. However, it should be emphasised that 'representational dualism' which I am adopting in reading Freud's works does not commit him to *substance* dualism: an archaic philosophical position in which the mind and body are conceived of distinct entities which not only have differing properties but are formed of different substances (Descartes 1641/1924, Zimmerman 2003). At several points in his work Freud vehemently denied the dualist position; an arguably natural stance for him to adopt given that dualist metaphysics strongly contradicts the positivistic empiricism that Freud held to be the gold standard of intellectual pursuits (Schimeck 1975). Nevertheless, Freud can be seen to adopt several dualist principles in framing the imagination as he does.

### **The Image as a Middle Ground: Philosophical Accounts of Imaginative Thought**

The notion that the imagination (characterised as an inherently visual phenomena) represents a middle ground between the 'thinking' mind and the sensorial body, thus representing a 'lower' form of mental activity than conceptual, rational thinking was a common theme throughout the history of philosophy from the writings of the Ancient Greeks and throughout the Early Modern Period (Sartre 1936/2012: 9 -20). It was called into question, arguably, only with Immanuel Kant's revolutionary theory that the imagination underlies the totality of psychological life (Kant (178/1900/2007). The influence of Kant on Freud's thinking will be covered later in this chapter and

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<sup>15</sup> The range of thinkers that have been aligned with Freud is, I believe, a symptom of the fact that his theory lies open to a dualist reading in general. He does not seem to adopt any one system in its entirety.

throughout the next. For now, it is worth taking a deeper look at the delineation between 'thought' and the sensory imagination in some major philosophical schools of thought.

Throughout history, western philosophy has relied on a notion of 'thinking' that is different in kind to mental images, perception and other bodily sensations as a way of delineating mental from the physical (McDowell 1996; Sartre 1936/2012) .

Historically, this approach was infused with theological motivations: it was the framework within which the existence of a non-corporeal soul could be established in line with religious teachings and be said to have different properties to the body, such as an unchanging immortal nature (Sartre 1936/2012:28). Adopting an underlying dualist philosophy was appealing in so far as it made space for physiological science to advance without threatening the dominant religious law of the day. Perhaps as a result of these religious sensibilities dualist metaphysical systems often exhibit a deep anxiety around physicality, which continued even when the soul came to be replaced with more neutral concept of a 'mind'. Such philosophies often adopt the attitude that the 'purer' thinking is (the less it is contaminated by anything bodily), the better. Imagination and emotion, although acknowledged as mental acts, both have an unavoidable physical element: emotions come with attendant bodily sensations, imagination with attendant visual sensations, which, in turn, grants them both a 'lower' status in the mind (Descartes 1641/1924). Although each philosophical school adopts a unique take on the specifics of the imagination, a few general areas of consensus can be identified that are useful for our current purposes. For instance, several philosophical schools agreed that the imagination is a 'low' form of thinking; a mental act sullied by its similarity with physical sensations and its capacity to deceive the imagining subject. Imagination,

according to this point of view, should be differentiated from ‘thought’ proper (Modrak 2016). ‘Thinking’, in contrast, has the capacity to grant the subject knowledge through rational insight and, through this application of reason, the individual could be ‘free’ in an otherwise determined universe (Descartes 1641/1924, Sartre 1936/2012). Freud’s account of imagery and imagination arguably resonates with accounts given in by a broad range of philosophers through history who have taken a similar view of the distinction between ‘thinking’ and imagination, ranging from the Ancient Greek works of Plato and Aristotle through the Early Modern period (such as Descartes, Spinoza, Locke and Hume) (See Kind ed. 2016). Despite the fact that Freud’s discovery of the unconscious dealt one of the greatest blows in history to man’s self-image as a rational being, Freud nevertheless promoted psychoanalysis “as reason’s best tool” (Tauber 2010: 125). In this regard, Freud’s aims are often deceptively in line with rationalist philosophy; considering a knowing self-consciousness, guided by reason, to be the pinnacle of human mental experience.

Suspicion against the reliability of sense data in granting the individual access to knowledge was a prominent theme in Plato’s early Greek philosophy (Bundy 1922). Considering these works can give us a good sense of how deeply entrenched certain ‘common-sense’ assumptions about the imagination are and, more importantly, show how the body and sensation – and by extension, the imagination- came to be set *against* knowledge (Kind & Kung ed. 2016). This view, which I have argued is incorporated by Freud, can be dramatically contrasted with the proposed ‘reality oriented’ imagination which sees the imagination as inherently knowledge seeking. Plato famously posited the realm of The Forms, the timeless and unchanging essences of things that exist in a realm beyond the physical world (Bundy 1922: 363). Physical and material substances, including the body, were regarded by Plato



with upmost suspicion, considered too changeable and deceptive to grant the individual insight into 'truth'. The process of gaining true knowledge, for Plato, was constituted by the ability to transcend the realm of physical experience. Although he did not write on the imagination to the same extent as his disciple Aristotle (discussed below), his sparse references to mental imagery demonstrate that he did not hold it in good stead arguing that images, as copies of material particulars, are doubly removed from reality, being copies of copies (Bundy 1922:363).

It is the combination of the sensory nature of the imagination and its power to deceive that arguably prompts Aristotle to portray it as a 'middleman' between perception and 'thought' (which he called 'intellection') (Modrak 2016: 47). This mix of properties grants the imagination just enough distance from reality to be deceptive, but not enough to allow it to abstract from reality in the form of intellection. Aristotle was working with a model of perception as a passive force that takes in the external objects presented to it. On his view, imagination could interfere with perception in instances of error, but he did not believe that perception itself contained imaginative elements.

### **Descartes: Imagination as Deception**

A prime example of the presumed connection between sensation and deception can be found in Descartes' notorious sceptical challenge, in which he aimed to disavow all knowledge gained through experience in an attempt to ascertain which sources of knowledge he could infallibly trust (Descartes 1641/1924). The very first source of knowledge that Descartes disavowed was sense experiences, which he reasoned carried a high potential for error: after all, if he could be fooled into believing false experiences in a dream, how could he be sure that his senses were not always deceiving him? Descartes solution, in short, was to only seek knowledge through

‘thought’ or ‘intellection’; that which can give rise to knowledge independently of sense experience (Descartes 1641/1924). For Descartes, the radical dichotomy between thought and sensation parallels several other philosophical dualisms: that between body and the soul, rationality and animal instincts, freedom and determinism (Hardy 2016). In creating this dichotomy Descartes places the imagination closer to the material body than the rational mind. Rather than being a mental activity in the strict sense, the imagination is a mechanism of the body that mysteriously traverses the abyss between the mind and the brain and excites “innate” ideas so that they are experienced as conscious intellectual activity (see Sepper 1996). A Cartesian mental image, as Sartre describes it is “an object by the same right as external objects. It is exactly the limit of exteriority” (Sartre 1936/2012: 9).

Although Freud did not concern himself with a Cartesian level of metaphysical speculation, preferring instead to take the individual’s capacity to relate to reality as unproblematic (see discussion above), he nevertheless exploits a similar link between sensation and deception; creating a theoretical picture in which primary process mechanisms take advantage of a sensory (mostly visual) forms of representation as a means of negating reality by replacing it with an alternative perceptual scene which represents wishes as being fulfilled (Freud 1900, 1907).

Descartes justifies his denigration of the imagination by appealing to the second quality of the image that Freud identifies: its inability to form rational links between ideas. Descartes argues that the visual imagining “differs from pure intellection only in this respect, that the mind in conceiving turns in some way upon itself, and considers some one of the ideas it possesses within itself; but in imagining it turns toward the body, and contemplates in it some object conformed to the idea which it

either of itself conceived or apprehended by sense" (Descartes 1641/1924 quoted in Sepper 1996:1) Although Cartesian Dualism has lost popularity over the years, the more neutral idea that imagistic thought differs from its linguistic counterpart because it cannot act as a representational vehicle for reflection persists to this day. For instance, Jose Luis Bermudez argues in *Thinking without Words* (2003) that linguistic, conceptual thoughts can be differentiated from non-linguistic thoughts according to their ability to have "intentional ascent" (2003: 151), a psychological function which implies reflective capacity. Reflective thought requires not only thinking about the content of the thought, but also its "vehicle" or representational structure. Freud's comments on the differing natures of thought and imagination can therefore be placed within an established and continuing tradition. This does not necessarily commit him to a metaphysical or functional dualism but it does, arguably, reinforce his own claim that acts of visual thought cannot act as vehicles for rational thinking in virtue of their pictorial nature. This insight can then be helpfully woven into the seemingly paradoxical statement that the conscious experience of a visual thought is not fully conscious (Freud 1923).

I have aimed to offer some theoretical background to my reading of the Freudian imagination by demonstrating that the presumption that the image is both sensory and deceptive has tended to dominate philosophical discourse. These factors combine to make the mental image an unsuitable vehicle for thought and, as a natural extension, for knowledge, including the form of self-knowledge that psychoanalysis (in its more traditional formulations) prizes so highly. Through considering the treatment of the image from a philosophical perspective, we can see how the visual imagination fails in the epistemological arena on three counts, all of which map onto Freud's own metapsychological claims. Firstly, the mental image cannot itself express knowledge without being interpreted by more

sophisticated secondary process mechanisms: without being described in words. Secondly, visual daydreams (being derived from the wish-fulfilling hallucination) tend to interrupt an individual's connection with external reality by taking over the sensory apparatus (Freud 1900, 1907; Varendonck 1921). We see a similar worry articulating itself through various different schools of philosophy, leading to general suspicion of imagistic representation. The third epistemic failure of the image, from a Freudian perspective, concerns its content. Much like night dreams (although arguably not to the same extent) daydreams are indecipherable to their subject in virtue of the fact that they express disguised derivatives of unconscious wishes and conflicts (Freud 1901, 1908).

### **Freud and Kantian Metaphysics:**

It will now be necessary to move beyond the philosophical theories discussed so far and consider Freud's debt to another metaphysical giant: Immanuel Kant. Kant is a highly important figure to consider for the current project because of the manner in which he revolutionized our conception of the imagination and provided a blueprint for it as a 'reality oriented' mental process (Kant 1781/2005/1900/2007). Kant's position will be worth setting out in some detail as it will provide the necessary context for both Tauber's (2010) reading of Kant and the Kantian inspired accounts of perceptual neuroscience given later in this thesis (Friston 2012; Hopkins 2012, 2016, see Chapter Four). Nevertheless, it remains far beyond the scope of this argument to give a satisfactory account of Kant's transcendental philosophy, and as a result many subtleties will be missed.

Kant's 'Copernican revolution' is cantered on the devastatingly simple recognition that no vantage point outside our own experience is possible: one cannot, as a matter of principle, obtain an objective picture of the external world or mental processes as they are in themselves (Kant (1781/1900/2007). As such, he

was overtly opposed to Cartesian metaphysics and its confidence in the power of rational intellection to uncover ‘truth’ (Allison 2004: 21-26). If one had to nail down a starting point to Kantian metaphysics it would be the question of *how mental representation is possible at all*: what capacities must be present in our minds in order to allow us to represent the external environment in the way that we do? Kant operates from the starting point that we cannot know things as they are *in themselves* but are restricted to how they *appear to us* (Kant 1781/1900/2007).

Kant also rejected Hume’s “naïve” empiricism: Patricia Kitcher, in her work *Kant’s Transcendental Psychology* (1990), has argued that Kant is best understood as implicitly replying to deep problems in Hume’s philosophy of mind by showing that association alone could not possibly account for how we have the stable, unified experience of objects (see Kitcher 1990)<sup>16</sup>.

Kant’s rebuttal of Hume’s philosophy begins by acknowledging the rudimentary fact that to represent an object a set of cognitive states must be *consistent and coherent*. For example, I cannot have the (accurate) representation of a book in front of me as both red and blue at the same time; the sensory stream must be united into an overarching representation. Although unity is necessary for representing objects, we cannot derive it from objects because *the unity itself not given in perception*. The *unity* of conscious experience must therefore be achieved by the synthesis of the manifold of sensory data in the ‘productive’ imagination (Kant 1781/1900/2007).

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<sup>16</sup> As discussed above, Hume attempted to show the experience of objects in our environment as *constant* using the “Law of Association” (Hume 1777: 31). Kant demonstrates that this is problematic: if habit alone were responsible for the combination of certain sets of sensations into objects, then our constant exposure to a match being struck and catching fire should, in theory, cause us to see the match and the flame as the same object but this does not happen. We do, however, consistently see different parts of the same telephone as the same object (see Kitcher 1990). Teasing out the difference in kind between these two cases requires us to look at the ways in which our minds use certain principles to synthesise sense data

A key aspect of Kant's metaphysical project is his assertion that there are two forms of imagination: the reproductive imagination and the productive imagination. The former, in a comparable manner to the philosophical theories of the image outlined so far, consists of the rebirth of inert sensory experiences which occur in the mind but are nevertheless 'thoughtless'. The productive imagination, in contrast, consists of the same representational building blocks as thought. The productive imagination, importantly, is a 'transcendental' faculty of the mind. The term 'transcendental' should not be confused with 'transcendent': Kantian metaphysics is not concerned with what goes *beyond* experience but what is *constitutive of experience itself*. So, for example, when Kant argues in the "Transcendental Aesthetic" (Kant 1781/1900/2007: 21-35) that whatever we perceive in the world we necessarily perceive as occurring within space, he is not trying to establish a relationship between the individual and the world where one asserts something about the other in a primarily one directional manner. Rather, his idea is that a certain kind of being is *open to reality* in a way that is shaped by the *kind of being* it is. (Kant 1781/1900/2007: 21-35)

Due this transcendental status, the exact notion of the productive imagination is incredibly complex. It is also of paramount importance to the current discussion, as whether one views Kantian philosophy as compatible with empirical data depends, in part, upon the interpretation of the productive imagination that one adopts. On the one hand, the productive imagination may be considered as a metaphysical construct which allows for the possibility of organised knowledge which is nonetheless grounded in experience. On the other, it can be read as a naturalistic theory, a description of the mechanisms that the human brain puts to work when

creating experience. The latter interpretation will be the focus of Chapter Four. I will turn to the former now.

### **Freud, Kant and the ‘Paradox’ of Freedom**

In *Freud, the Reluctant Philosopher* (2010) Alfred Tauber draws out the Kantian themes in Freud’s work without reference to naturalized accounts of the productive imagination. Instead, he argues that Freud adopts a Kantian position in trying to accommodate both free will and psychological determinism within the same model of the mind (Tauber 2010). While Freud championed psychic determinism as one of the core features of unconscious functioning and a highly necessary mechanism in formation of symptoms which spring from chains of associative ideas, he nevertheless makes *breaking* psychic determinism an essential feature of psychoanalysis as a form of therapy. This, Tauber argues, embroils Freud in a free will- determinism paradox that mirrors the approach taken by Kant. Like Kant, Freud appeals to reason as the bearer of free will in the face of natural causation:

Although split by a cautious confidence and a despondent resignation, Freud tirelessly promoted psychoanalysis as reason’s best tool, an idea lifted directly from Kant’s conception of autonomy (Schneewind 1998), which follows a complex development of reason’s character (Tauber 2010: 125).

He continues:

To fulfil its function, reason must be free of experience, and, on this view, the ability to survey the world and make judgements depends on reason’s independence of that world. Reason, accordingly, resides outside the natural domain, free and autonomous, to order nature through scientific insight and regulate human behaviour through rational moral discourse. This allows creative

judgment in science and freedom of choice in the social (ethical) domain)  
(Tauber 2010: 127).

Tauber argues that the conscious aspects of Freudian ego function, much like Kantian reason, as a mediating force (ibid 128). For Kant, reason is able to be a source of knowledge and normativity in a causally deterministic universe by acting as its own legislator, ordering the world according to its own reflection, thus taking an active stance in the face of the ultimate unknowability of 'things in themselves'. Analogously, the Freudian ego accesses unconscious thoughts not directly (which is impossible) but through translating them into secondary process thought structures, forcing unconscious processes to structure themselves according to the ego's own laws, rather than the primary processes native to the unconscious. Thus "psychoanalysis would empower the ego's rational faculty by penetrating the unconscious to discern its functions through rational enquiry" (Tauber 2010: 129). Kantian reason is careful not to claim omniscience in the manner of the Cartesian 'intellect' but it is nonetheless the medium through which knowledge is possible, bounded and qualified though this knowledge may ultimately prove to be.

Drawing out this element of Freudian theory is useful for the current analysis in so far as it reinforces the idea that the imagination (in the Freudian sense of the term, rather than the Kantian) is an unsuitable route to self-knowledge. Rather than granting the mind a psychological vantage point from which it can be 'free of experience' in order to rationally understand it, and, by extension, exert some form of control over it, acts of imagination submerge the individual even deeper within their subjectivity. In drawing on visual imagery as a form of experiential 'import', imaginative processes not only ensure that they can be sensorially gratifying but that they resist organization into rational thought structures. As the rational organization



of arational experience is what constitutes psychic freedom, it follows that the imagination, especially in its visual form, cannot be a route to liberation from unconscious forces.

## **Conclusion**

Freud's assumptions about the nature of perception and thinking arguably place the imagination in an epistemologically precarious position. On Freud's view, the inherent ability of the imagination to generate representations (with the relevant 'experiential underside' (see Kind 2001)) of things which are not directly present to the observer cannot be used for the benefit of either perceptual or reflective processes. Instead, the generative power of the imagination simply exerts a pull on the individual away from the reality principle and towards the pleasure principle, creating a greater susceptibility for psychopathology in the process (Freud 1908, 1911). In terms of perception, the imagination is portrayed as having the power to both pull the individual's attention away from external sense data by eclipsing it with fantastical daydreams and also by co-opting perception in the service representing unconscious phantasies (Freud 1909b, 1912). In both cases, the aim of the imaginative process is not to make *sense* of experience but, much like a night dream, to gain a limited amount of psychical release for unconscious drives via the process of representation (Freud 1895/1950, 1901).

Freud also denies a role for the imagination in secondary process thinking. While the conscious imagination may be an important signpost to self-knowledge (itself one of the pinnacles of secondary process activity) by providing it 'raw material' through daydreams and streams of imagery in free association, this can only be transformed into self-knowledge when (again much like a night dream) its

symbolic content is decoded and ‘translated’ into secondary process thought structures (Freud 1896b, 1915a)<sup>17</sup>.

Both of these views set Freud against contemporary psychological and neuroscientific understanding of perception and cognition, which are considered psychological processes that are *inherently* susceptible to bias even in the absence of unconscious influence (Clark 2016; Raftopoulos 2009). Where Freud portrays failures in clear thinking, seeing and knowing as inevitable, contemporary schools of thought present them as *necessary*. This is highly important in so far as both perception and thought can be construed as *developmental achievements*. In the next chapter, I will discuss how an analogous position has been attained within traditional psychoanalytic theory by considering the relationship between imagination and knowledge from a developmental perspective.

Philosophical systems which forge a dualism between thought and sensation may therefore provide a useful context for interpreting Freud’s theory of the imagination. Yet this philosophical approach is also markedly outdated and can be seen to project far more philosophical baggage onto psychoanalysis than is either necessary or desired. By defining the mind as an entity that cannot, by definition, be grasped via the methods of empirical science it also rules out the possibility of a union between psychoanalysis and empirical brain sciences a priori.

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<sup>17</sup> It will be remembered from Chapter One that repression lifts when the relevant word and thing presentations are connected and accompanied by the cathartic release of the appropriate affect.



## **Chapter Three**

### **The Imagination, the Object and the Outside World**

The first section of this work introduced the concept of the imagination in traditional Freudian psychoanalytic theory. I argued that Freud presents the imagination as a sensory phenomenon with psychopathological flavour; a concrete, primitive thought process that has a tendency to distract and distance the individual from reality (Freud 1900, 1907, 1911). This is significant from a Freudian perspective, according to which the ultimate aim of psychoanalysis (unattainable though it may be in practice) is to replace the inherently unrealistic primary process with the realistic secondary process (a conceptual-linguistic mode of thought, whose chief aim is rationally-oriented action in the external world) (Freud 1923). Through a survey of Freud's comments on creativity and daydreaming, we saw that at its best imaginative thought may be a vehicle for an act of sublimation which converts unconscious drives into material reality in the form of a piece of creative work (Freud 1907, 1910, 1914). At its worst, imaginative daydreaming is a precursor for hysterical and neurotic symptoms, initiating a strong pull away from the external world, towards psychic reality (Breuer & Freud 1895; Freud 1900, 1911).

In order to contextualise Freud's theory of imaginative thought I drew attention to conceptual similarities between Freudian metapsychology and the treatment of the imagination in philosophy, suggesting that Freud's treatment of the mental image follows a general trend of considering mental imagery 'outside' the mind (Sartre 1936/2012). Against this backdrop the 'pathology' of the visual imagination is understandable: it is a psychological act that has a tendency to work against 'realistic' thinking, both because it is naturally deceptive (by pulling the thinker away from actualities) and because it is not cognitively sophisticated enough to represent

‘truths’ which require language and concepts alongside mental images (Descartes 1641/1924; Freud 1914, 1923a).

My aim in this thesis is to introduce a new way of conceptualising the imagination by demonstrating that many characteristics that Freud grants it can be effectively reversed. Rather than distracting from the external world of ‘people and things’, imaginative thought may be a necessary way of ‘accessing’ the external world; in particular when it is characterised as a principally interpersonal phenomenon (Fonagy et. al 2002, Fonagy & Luyten 2009).

Furthermore, imaginative processes may be necessary to convert affective experiences into a robust sense of self and agency that can be used in aid of establishing and maintaining a sound epistemic relationship with the world (Fonagy et. al. 2002:145 -253). Both of these claims are embodied within the mentalization model, a psychoanalytic approach which locates successful affect regulation within the individual’s capacity to imaginatively interpret affects and behaviour in terms of their underlying mental states (Bateman & Fonagy 2010; Fonagy & Luyten 2009). From a ‘mentalizing’ point of view the imagination is not an obstacle to knowledge, but the mode through which we can know the minds of both others and ourselves.

### **Psychic Health Revisited:**

An important consequence of adopting an ‘imaginative’ view of psychic health is that it grants health an *active character* which goes beyond the simple absence of psychopathology. This approach can be traced back to the works of Winnicott who, as we saw in the introduction, believed that classic instinct theory did not have the theoretical resources to account for the *quality of experience* that defines psychic health. In “the Location of Cultural Experience”, for example, he states:

That is to say, we have yet to tackle the question of what life itself is about...we now see that it is not instinctual satisfaction that makes a baby begin to be, to feel that life is real, to feel that life is worth living. (Winnicott (1871/2005: 133).

Through the argument presented in this thesis I am aiming to demonstrate that 'reality oriented' imagining offers a means of characterising psychic health in a more *active* light. While Winnicott was not overtly concerned with issues surrounding knowledge and learning, and only wrote one paper explicitly on the topic of the imagination (Winnicott 1971/2005:33-50), he developed a model of mind and psychopathology which offered a far more nuanced and compelling view of the relationship between the subject and the environment than was offered by earlier analysts such as Freud (see Chapters One and Two) and Klein (1921/1975, 1928, 1946, see below). According to his perspective, the individual's capacity to make a connection with a truly *objective* reality is a developmental achievement which requires both the development of an affectively grounded 'true self' and the capacity to tolerate the 'paradoxical' nature of 'transitional spaces' (see below). Following Fonagy and colleagues in the mentalization literature, I will argue that these aspects of Winnicottian theory will be highly useful in understanding what it means to have an imaginative relationship to reality (Fonagy et. a. 2002:253-291).

The central aim of this chapter will be to chart a conceptual journey between Freud's conceptualization of the imagination and Winnicott's theory of creativity, with a particular focus on the changing status of the external world for the developing infant across different theoretical approaches. This will be important for setting the scene for a discussion of the 'reality oriented' imagination, which centres on the epistemic relationship between 'mind and world' (see McDowell 1996). Importantly, I hope to emphasise that Winnicott significantly disrupts Freud's account of

psychopathology by arguing that it can be caused by *excessive compliance to the external environment* and not simply through unmanageable instinctual conflicts (Winnicott 1971/2005). Winnicott therefore 'locates the source' of psychopathology in the relationship between the individual and the environment, rather than straightforwardly in the internal world. Both Bion (1962/1984) and Fairbairn (1952/1994) follow Winnicott to certain extent in this regard, although with important caveats that will be discussed below.

### **'Frontier Concepts' from Drives to Transitional Phenomena**

Freud and Winnicott's differing approaches to the relationship between internal and external reality can be mapped onto the differing conceptions of the imagination relevant for this thesis. It will be recalled from the previous section that the imagination has often been granted a 'middleman' status, whether between sensation and 'thinking' (as in the works of Aristotle and Descartes) or between the subject and her environment (as in Kantian metaphysics). Freud and Winnicott both appeal to similar 'intermediary' spaces in their conceptualizations of psychopathology, Freud through his notion of the drive as a 'frontier' phenomena between the body and the mind (Freud 1915b), and Winnicott in his emphasis on the 'transitional space' between the internal and external worlds (Winnicott 1971/2005). Both drives and transitional spaces involve the toleration of a paradox. As Freud describes in 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes':

If now we apply ourselves to considering mental life from a *biological* point of view, an 'instinct' appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made

upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body (Freud 1915b: 121-122).

In contrast, Winnicott describes his theory of transitional phenomena as follows:

Transitional objects and transitional phenomena belong to the realm of illusion which is at the basis of initiation of experience...this intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality, constitutes the greater part of the infant's experience and throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work (Winnicott 1971/2005: 19).

Freud has been accused of conceptual contradictions in his use of the term 'drive', at times equating it with the primary process and at others describing the primary process as the *representation* of the drive in the unconscious mind (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983; 23). For the purpose of the current argument, the relevant point is simply that Freud placed the 'frontier' *within* the individual, a fact which heavily informs his understanding of psychopathology and its clinical treatment. As I shall unpack below, it also directly accounts for his portrayal of imaginative processes as concerned with the internal world of wish-fulfilment.

Winnicottian theory can be seen to embody a concept of 'reality oriented' imagining in a way that Freudian theory cannot. Although Winnicott's concerns in formulating the notion of a 'creative' relationship with reality are far from Kant's metaphysical aims, he can nevertheless be seen to epitomise the movement of the paradoxical 'imaginative space' from the internal world, applying it instead to the individual's connection with external reality. In doing so, Winnicott not only forges a



theory of psychic health that goes above and beyond a simple lack of pathology but opens up an arena in which the imagination can be considered to be a form of accessing reality rather than insulating oneself from it (Winnicott 1971/2005: 133).

Charting a conceptual course between Freud and Winnicott will allow us to see how psychoanalytic theory has transformed in such a way that it has created a demand for a form of ‘reality oriented’ imagining and will set the scene for the discussion to come in later chapters. After considering Freud’s portrayal of external reality for the developing infant, I will explore the contributions of Klein, Bion, and Fairbairn, finishing with a deeper look at Winnicott. In what follows, I will aim to draw out how this change is tied to different portrayals of infantile development across psychoanalytic theory. More specifically, I will argue that in order for the imagination to become a celebrated capacity, major assumptions about the nature of the mind and psychopathology found in traditional Freudian models need to change. The first and most obvious of these is the importance of interpersonal relationships: if psychological health involves the ability to understand others as beings with thoughts and feelings in their own right, relations with others (‘objects’) must be important beyond their role in the release of instinctual tension. Secondly, as the imagination is geared towards ‘other minds’ in reality and not only in phantasy, the external world must be granted a significant degree of influence over an individual’s development and psychological life.

### **The ‘Relational Turn’**

For the purposes of the current chapter I will not consider the contributions of attachment theory, the mentalization model or neuropsychanalysis to the understanding of infantile development, as these will be outlined when the relevant empirical advances have been unpacked and discussed (See Chapter Six). Rather,

this chapter will set the scene by demonstrating how ‘traditional’ psychoanalytic theory – that which does not concern itself with empirical justification or methodology – has advanced in such a way that it has conceptual similarities to empirical approaches, leaving them open to theoretical integration. Rachel Blass and Zvi Carmelli describe this as the ‘relational turn’ in psychoanalysis and point to how to facilitate integration between psychoanalysis and attachment theory:

The [Relational] group's basic claim is that psychoanalysis in some very limited sense may have always included relational elements, but its true relational potential had not until recently been fully recognized and actualized...the true father of the Relational approach is Sandor Ferenczi and his relational legacy may be seen to run through the teachings of Fairbairn, Balint and Winnicott, ultimately coming to fruition in American Relational psychoanalysis. This legacy is thought to be supported empirically by the findings of Attachment theory and infant research like that of Daniel Stern and to be philosophically grounded in post-modern thinking (Blass & Carmelli 2010: 217).

As psychoanalytic theory has morphed from a reasonably homogenous body of knowledge united around a few key thinkers (e.g. Freud, Ferenczi, Jung) into vast conglomerate of approaches, one trend arguably sticks out beyond others: the move from a focus on individual functioning towards interpersonal approaches. This movement is also identified by Greenberg and Mitchell (1983), who argue:

The most significant tension in the history of psychoanalytic ideas has been the dialectic between the original Freudian model, which takes as its starting point the instinctual drives, and a comprehensive model initiated in the works of Fairbairn and Sullivan, which evolve structure solely from the individual's

relations with other people. Accordingly, we designate the original model the drive/structure model and the alternative perspective the relational/structure model (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983: 20).

The two schools of thought – drive/structure and interpersonal/structure-adopt differing stances on the nature of ‘external reality’ and the role it plays in an individual’s development. As discussed previously, the Freudian school places little to no emphasis on external reality in development and laments its apparent lack of influence over individuals with neurotic and psychotic symptoms (Breuer & Freud 1895, Freud 1924a). In so far as Freud can be said to have a theory of the *nature of reality*, he characterises it as objective and a-personal (Freud 1930). The relational/structure model, which Blass and Carmelli note has become increasingly popular in recent years, defines reality as inherently personal and subjective, co-created by the experiences of those participating in it (Stern 2003, Wallin 2007).

Greenberg and Mitchell’s trajectory from drive/structure to relational/structure approaches is highly useful for the current chapter in identifying an underlying shift in emphasis within psychoanalysis towards the external, interpersonal world. It will also require the recognition of a third approach, not explicitly mentioned by Greenberg and Mitchell above: the object relations approach (Buckley ed. 1986), which I will turn to after returning to Freudian theory from an alternate perspective.

### **Instincts, Narcissism and the Internal World**

Exploring the impact on instinct theory will require returning to Freud’s theory of the imagination from a different viewpoint: rather than considering the imagination in the context of Freud’s theories of mental representation, I will look at it as a natural by-product of Freud’s status as an instinct theorist. Instinct theory, centred on Freud’s

theory of the drive described above, entails that psychological life is essentially an adaption to needs arising from within. From this vantage point, the external world becomes relevant to the developing infant only when it either fails to meet bodily needs or puts impositions on their expression (Freud 1905b, 1911, 1915b).

Greenberg and Mitchell describe how this initial idea, founded in Freud's understanding of biology, leads to a set of philosophical assumptions about the nature of man:

The unit of study of psychoanalysis is the individual, viewed as a discrete entity. Man is not, in Aristotle's terms, a "political animal": he does not require a social organisation to allow him to realise his true human potential. Society is imposed on an already complete individual for his protection, but at the cost and renunciation of many of his most important personal goals (1912-13, 1930). It is thus possible and even necessary to speak of a person divorced from his interpersonal context in a way that is not possible given the fundamental assumptions of Aristotle, Rousseau, Sullivan or Fairbairn (Greenberg and Mitchell 1983:44)

The developmental narrative that Freud uses to underpin this philosophical view of man understands infantile and childhood development as a movement away from autoeroticism towards mature object relating (Freud 1905b). In doing so, it importantly posits a form of primary narcissism as a developmental stage, rather than a pathological deviation (Freud 1914), a theoretical move which only serves to emphasise that immature thought processes should be seen as absorbed with the internal world at the expense of connecting with external reality (in Chapter Six, I will discuss how contemporary perspectives effectively reverse this position).

Instincts, in virtue of their general nature, entail that the internal rather than external reality is the driving force in psychological life. In addition to this, Freud specified that the contents of the instincts are initially focused on the self, primarily one's own body (Freud 1915b: 181- 183). Although Freud argued that the infant's psychosexual instincts are directed towards an 'object', he frames the object as a point of instinctual release rather than social or emotional connection (Freud 1905b). This object, who in most circumstances is initially the mother, is primarily the means through which the instinct has the chance to be satisfied (Freud 1905b). Although the relationship between the instinct and the object may be complex (Freud describes the instinct's 'openness' to a number of psychological mechanisms such as 'reversal into the opposite' (Freud 1905b, 1915b)), the object remains, in essence, the pathway through which a drive can find discharge. Freud's development perspective thus adopts a markedly different stance to approaches such as attachment theory (Bowlby 1997; Fonagy 2001). If 'dependency' on the object does develop, this takes the form of a 'learned response': the infant who is used to having her overwhelming primary process instincts reduced through a particular person will come to see that person as a necessary part of the soothing process.

At the beginning of life, the very young infant uses her own body as a source of pleasure, aiming to recreate early memories of physical pleasure (such as feeding from the breast) with bodily movements that simulate the same sensations (such as thumb sucking) (Freud 1905b :179). In the following passage 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', Freud describes how the sexual satisfaction becomes disconnected from the intake of nourishment per se and becomes focused on the pleasure generated by an erotogenic zone of the infant's own body:

The need for repeating the sexual satisfaction now becomes detached from the need for taking nourishment – a separation becomes inevitable when the food is no longer taken in only by sucking, but is also chewed up. The child does not make use of an extraneous body for his sucking but prefers part of his own skin because it is more convenient, because it makes him independent of the external world, which he is not yet able to control, and because in that way he provides himself, as it were, a second erotogenic zone. (Freud 1905b: 182).

Freud justifies his notion of infantile auto-eroticism by theorising that early in life sexual and self-preservative instincts are fused, with feeding and other bodily pleasure acting as a 'prototype' of later genital sexual satisfaction (it should be noted here that his claim is not that self-preservative instincts proceed sexual instincts, but rather that early in life one cannot differentiate the two (1905b)).

Another means through which Freud emphasised the internal focus of the early infant was in his proposal that narcissism is not an aberration but a normal developmental stage (Freud 1914). Freud's theory of narcissism did not receive its first full treatment until his 1914 paper "On Narcissism: An Introduction" in which he proposed that narcissism should be considered a normal stage in development; a mid-point between autoeroticism and object relating (Freud 1914). This paper, it can be argued, only deepened the reliance of Freudian metapsychology on instinct theory. For one, narcissism was introduced as a way of saving Freud's concept of libido from Jung's proposal that it should refer to psychological investment, rather than wholly to the sexual instincts (Freud 1914: 74). Jung pointed to schizophrenia as the clinical embodiment of this problem: how could the sexual instincts account for the symptoms megalomania and renunciation of the external world characteristic of psychotic states? Freud, in response, suggested that the symptoms of

schizophrenia (which he termed 'secondary narcissism') signified a regression to an earlier developmental state – a 'primary narcissism' – in which the infant takes themselves as their first sexual object (Freud 1914: 75)<sup>18</sup>. Thus the introduction of narcissism amplified Freud's idea that the contents of the instincts are self-focused and bolstered the notion that the individual is not object-seeking by nature. It can be argued that the first important step in the growth of an understanding of the imagination as a 'reality oriented' force is the renunciation of the drive/structure approach, in which neither the internal world of the 'self' nor the external environment requires supplementing with imaginative processes.

### **The Role of External Reality**

Freud's account of psychosexual development can be seen to corroborate the account I gave in the previous chapter, according to which Freud understands reality as straightforwardly open to the individual so long as internal processes, generated by the body via the unconscious, can be overcome. Imagination, in both the form of artistic works and adult daydreaming, is derivative from these internal instincts and thus has little to do with establishing a connection between the subject and the outside world (Freud 1908, 1920). It is worth emphasising, however, that Freud was not suggesting that the individual moves through life in a solipsistic bubble, entirely unresponsive to his external affairs. Although the psychosexual stages themselves may be biologically determined, he naturally recognised that the subjective colouring

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<sup>18</sup> Jung's challenge was potentially devastating for Freud's theory of mind, which could not survive the dethroning of sexuality without his metapsychological 'scaffolding' collapsing. His proposed solution was primary narcissism: a state where sexual investment turns upon the ego and treats it as an object. It is interesting to note that Freud had trouble in establishing and justifying primary narcissism on a psychological level, which only served to heighten his reliance on biological instincts as a theoretical foundation. As Freud admits: "I should like at this point expressly to admit that the hypothesis of separate ego-instincts and sexual instincts (that is to say, the libido theory) rests scarcely at all upon a psychological basis, but derives its principal support from biology" (Freud 1914:79).

of an individual's experience will depend on the environment in which their instinctual fate plays out (Freud 1905a, 1909b). This is true even in early childhood. For example, the way that parents approach potty training during the anal stage may determine how the young child manages the conflict between the ego and the id: if excessive demands for cleanliness during toilet training are made on the child by the parents, this may lead to an 'anal' personality later in life, with the individual exhibiting compulsive levels of neatness and order in their management of external affairs (Freud 1905b).

Freud offers a lucid explanation of the interplay between instinctual forces and external experiences at the beginning of his work 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex' (1924) in which he demonstrates how two views of the process of dissolution – an 'environmental' versus a 'hereditary' account – are not mutually exclusive. Freud begins by laying out these two views:

Even when no special events occur, like those we have mentioned as examples, the absence of the satisfaction hoped for, the continued denial of the desired baby, must in the end lead the small lover to turn away from his hopeless longing. In this way the Oedipus complex would go to its destruction from its lack of success, from the effects of its internal impossibility. Another view is that the Oedipus complex must collapse because the time has come for its disintegration, just as the milk-teeth fall out when the permanent one begin to grow. Although the majority of human beings go through the Oedipus complex as an individual experience, it is nevertheless a phenomenon which is determined and laid down by heredity and which is bound to pass away according to programme when the next pre-ordained phase of development sets in. This being so, it is of no great importance what the occasions are which allow



this to happen, or, indeed, whether any such occasions can be discovered at all.(Freud 1924:173 – 174).

He continues, arguing that both positions influence development:

The justice of both these views cannot be disputed. Moreover, they are compatible. There is room for the ontogenetic view side by side with the more far-reaching phylogenetic one. It is also true that even at birth the whole individual is destined to die, and perhaps his organic disposition may already contain the indication of what he is to die from. Nevertheless, it remains of interest to follow out how this innate programme is carried out and in what way accidental noxae exploit his disposition (Freud 194a:173-4).

The Oedipus Complex, like death, is a universal phenomenon which plays out in a unique way for each individual: there is no escaping the fact that it will happen, but the how, why and when of the situation is unique and likely to be down to a combination of environmental and constitutional factors. Freud goes onto specifically relate this example to the 'castration complex' which he describes as universal (in the male child) and yet often brought about by the behaviour of those close to him (Freud 1924a: 174).

Despite Freud's recognition of the environment in this regard, he nonetheless places far less emphasis on it than later psychoanalytic theorists. The external affairs in an individual's life are portrayed with the air of an epiphenomena which can only be explanatory up to a certain point. It is tempting to borrow one of Freud's own metaphors to help elucidate this. In the 'Interpretation of Dreams' Freud explains the relationship between the dream's 'day residue' (memories and impressions from the days preceding the dream that contribute to its manifest content) to the unconscious

infantile wish which drives the dream by appealing to the metaphor of an entrepreneur and an investor (Freud 1900: 561). The entrepreneur (the day residue) needs an investor (an unconscious infantile wish) to provide capital in order for their idea to materialise (ibid). The day residue could not form a dream if there was no unconscious infantile wish striving for disguised expression. While the 'day residue' might provide the 'raw material' or 'content' of a dream (at least on a manifest level), unconscious wishes are the dream's 'reason for being'. In an analogous fashion, the incidentals of a person's life provide filler for the instinctual conflicts which are the ultimate driving force behind psychological symptoms and the structure of psychic life. Thus Freud's theory of the instincts can be seen to work in tandem with his theories of mental representation to construe the imagination as an immature aspect of psychic life which must be overcome in order to adapt to eternal reality to be possible.

### **Melanie Klein and the Introduction of Object Relations**

The task of reformulating Freudian metapsychology was taken up by the psychoanalytic theorists who followed him, many of whom felt dissatisfied with his characterisation of the instincts as blind and 'objectless'. One of the first prominent analysts to do this was Melanie Klein (1946, 1961, 2013), who is worth considering in the context of the current argument because her work, it can be argued, represents the first important shift away from the drive/structural perspective towards the drive/relational perspective. Despite being an instinct theorist, there are several ways in which Klein can be seen to contribute to changing perspectives on the external world and the imagination. Firstly, Klein's theory of the innate structure of the mind and the processes that govern it places more importance on the external, interpersonal environment than Freud's approach allowed (Segal 1964/1988). Her

replacement of the primary process with unconscious phantasy and her development of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions allow for a more nuanced approach towards the individual's relationship with reality than Freud's dichotomy of the pleasure and reality principles. For example, Kleinian analysts (such as Ronald Britton (1998) and Hanna Segal (1964/1988, 1991) can be seen to use Kleinian theory to promote a greater role for the imagination in psychological health than Freud through linking it with the depressive position. Finally, Klein explicitly introduced epistemological elements into development by postulating a drive 'to know', which she coined the 'epistemophilic instinct'. Her view on the role of knowledge seeking, however is in many ways diametrically opposed to the epistemic elements of the 'reality oriented' imagination through linking it with sexuality and instincts in a manner that makes it incompatible with contemporary approaches (Fonagy 2001; Rayner 1991). Despite this, Klein's contribution will be important to include as a point of contrast for how it approaches knowledge-seeking from the point of view of early instinctual experiences, and for how it inspired Bion's theory of "K" (which will itself form an important contribution to the epistemological elements of the 'reality oriented' imagination).

### **Development from a Kleinian Perspective**

Klein significantly shifted Freud's development timeline, arguing that many important aspects of psychosexual life, including the Oedipus Complex, could be dated to the first year of life (Klein 1928). She argues that, alongside the genital sexuality that accompanies the Oedipus Complex, the very young infant also has a rudimentary ego whose function was to ward off anxieties through the generation of *phantasies*. Phantasy, from a Kleinian perspective, lies somewhere between conscious acts of imagination and the primary process: although it is the most primitive mental activity,

it is generated by the ego and is more 'realistically' structured than the primary process assuming "a higher degree of ego organization than is usually postulated by Freud"( Segal 1964/ 1988 quoted in Buckley 1986: xvi) By dating the Oedipus Complex to the first year of life, Klein ensures that thought structures which Freud would consider relatively sophisticated in virtue of their level of structure and focus on objects exist at a deep unconscious level in the mind. As such, development of the notion of unconscious phantasy and its inherent ties to object representations can be seen to elevate the status of both the external world and the role of other people in psychoanalytic theory.

Klein postulated that even very young infants experience sadistic urges, which can manifest as phantasies of attacking, destroying or ridding the breast and the inside of the mother's body of all its goodness, motivated not only by sadistic hatred but overwhelming feelings of greed and envy (Klein 1921.1975, 1928). It is these strong feelings that Klein believed lead to the first drive for knowledge – the 'epistemophilic' instinct – in the child. As she describes:

The early connection between the epistemophilic impulse and sadism is very important for the whole mental development. This instinct, roused by the striving of the Oedipus tendencies, at first mainly concerns itself with the mother's womb, which is assumed to be the scene of all sexual processes and developments. The child is still dominated by the anal-sadistic libido-position which impels him to wish to appropriate the contents of the womb. He thus begins to be curious about what it contains, what it is like, etc. So the epistemophilic instinct and the desire to take possession come quite early to be most intimately connected with one another and at the same time with the sense of guilt aroused by the incipient Oedipus conflict (Klein 1928: 169 -170).

Far from the sub-personal predictive mechanisms outlined in the previous chapter, Klein's account of the child's 'need to know', which is first directed towards the (phantasised) internal contents of the mother's body, can be seen as a barely disguised need to possess the mother in her entirety. Here Klein is arguably not describing a situation in which the drive for knowledge masks an underlying need for possession, but rather one in which possessive attitude is enacted in the desire for knowledge: the act of knowing becomes an act of possession, which drastically distinguishes its phenomenological character from the 'reality oriented' imagining.

Although it is implicit in Klein's work that the individual, as for Freud, is *fully formed* before coming to meet the outside world (rather than formed within the process of relating to the external world), from Klein's perspective the individual nevertheless has an *in-built expectation* of the nature of the external environment (Segal 1964/1988). This entails that the young Kleinian infant, in contrast to the Freudian infant, has a rudimentary capacity for representing the external world prior to experience. As a result of its more sophisticated structure, phantasy also has a greater capacity to interact with reality than the primary process. In contrast to Freud's description of phantasy in 'Formulation on Two Principles of Mental Functioning' as a 'split off' part of the mind, Kleinian phantasy can be seen as a way of meaningfully processing external reality: it is the mind brought *to bear* on the world. Hanna Segal gives the following simple example of how the environmental factor can influence phantasy life:

Take, for instance, the infant who is beginning to get hungry and who overcomes hunger by an omnipotent hallucination of having a good feeding breast: his situation will be radically different if he soon fed than what it will be if he is allowed to remain hungry for a long time (Segal 1964/1988:4).

The manner in which Klein transforms Freudian thinking therefore heightens the importance of both external reality and its interpersonal dimensions. Klein presents a mind in which there is an *in-built expectation* of objects that exists *before objects have been meaningfully experienced*. Where Freud arguably used Kant's 'a priori' ideas to inform his theory of the secondary process conscious ego (which can 'meet' reality because it is structured according to space, time, cause and effect (Freud 1895/1950, 1915a,)) Klein sees the unconscious 'a priori' as a constellation of internal object relations. As a result it could be argued that she provides a blueprint of the mind which is constructed around an interpersonal external reality.

The fact the inside/outside dimension is so important in Klein's model of the mind leads to a greater *descriptive emphasis* on reality which Fonagy has argued is in keeping with general trends in post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory (Fonagy 2001:84). In the paranoid-schizoid position, for example, aggressive phantasies are coupled with a subsequent fear of retaliation from the object, leading to persecutory anxieties which are experienced as a threat to the self from the outside world (Klein 1921/1975, 2013). Although the infant's perception of external world will be highly coloured by phantasy and thus 'unrealistic', Klein nonetheless grants the infant a clear awareness that *there is an 'outside'*, coupled with a comparatively sophisticated set of assumptions about how objects in the outside world will behave in the face of the infant's destructive feelings (Klein 1921.1975). This differs substantially from Freud's account of the wish-fulfilling hallucination in early development, in which the infant is simply overwhelmed by internal instincts (Freud 1895, 1911).

Klein therefore implicitly presents the young infant as somewhat in tune with the external environment and can be credited with laying the groundwork for an

increased emphasis on environmental and interpersonal concerns. Where she remains loyal to the Freudian perspective, however, is in the 'location' of psychopathology within the individual: Klein adheres to the principle that an overreliance on primitive thought mechanisms such as splitting and projection can be derived from the infant's internal world and is not a response to events in their interpersonal environment (Klein 1921/1975, 1961). Where the environment can play a role, this is in ameliorating aggressive phantasies and facilitating the transition to the depressive position (Fonagy & Target 2003: 124, Rayner 1991: 24). This creates a general picture of psychopathology as an excess of 'internality' that can be rebalanced by readjusting the individual back towards the external environment; a theme which is consistent across Freudian and Kleinian theory. As we shall see shortly, it is Winnicott's challenge of this fundamental psychoanalytic assumption that allows for a picture of 'reality oriented' imagining to emerge (Winnicott 1971/2005: 115 – 127).

### **Imagination in the Depressive Position**

Before turning to Bion's elaboration of Klein's 'epistemophilic' instinct, it will be useful to consider how some prominent Kleinian analysts have portrayed the imagination as a 'reality oriented' process. Segal, in her work *Kleinian psychoanalysis and art*, argues that artistic creation represents attempts at psychic repair characteristic that is sought to relieve the guilt felt in this state. (Segal 1991). More fitting for the current debate is Ron Britton's (1998) notion of 'triangular space'; an imaginative mental capacity which he argues emerges when one resolves the Oedipus complex within the depressive position (the two, he believes, are mutually interdependent). Britton highlights how the introduction of a 'third' in the mind introduces the notion of 'outside' perspective, one in which we may be watched by another. In a manner

resonant with the mentalization model, his opens up 'space' in the mind for the consideration of alternative perspectives (Britton 1998). Where Segal follows the 'sublimation' approach towards a healthy use of the imagination (see discussion in Chapter One), Britton can be seen to provide an account that has many similarities to the construct of the 'reality oriented' imagining proposed here.

Furthermore, Fonagy et. al suggest that the depressive position "is at least analogous with the notion of the acquisition of [reflective functioning], which necessarily entails the recognition of hurt and suffering in the other as well as that of one's own role in the process" (Fonagy et al. 2002: 28). Britton grants the depressive position a similar role in granting the individual the recognition that their mental states are *representative*, arguing that "It is the shift from thinking one knows a fact to realising that one has a belief which is linked to self-awareness" (Britton 1998:14). Describing two situations in which, at different points in his childhood, Britton's beliefs in both God and Santa Claus were drawn into question, Britton points out that an important aspect of total belief is that one does not *take oneself* to be holding a belief at all; one simply sees a fact about the external world:

For me, the doubtful edifice I accepted without question as a young child included the existence of God. As a child I did not realise until I first encountered the word 'atheist' that I believed in God; until that moment I thought God was a fact. There was an unnerving precedent for this discovery, which was that at a much earlier age I met a child sceptic, and it was only then I realised that Father Christmas was not a fact but a belief of mine. (Britton 1998: 14).

Analogously, reflective functioning requires that one comes to *take a view on oneself* as holding a thought, feeling or belief about another. It is only when mental states



can be identified and experienced as *mental states* that a difference between how one takes things to be and 'reality' becomes a possibility be entertained. In this regard, Britton's thinking about the psychic space created by triangularity may be useful in conceptualizing a 'reality oriented' form of imagining.

While the depressive position seems to make a mentalizing stance possible, the two should not be taken as synonymous, as depressive position is not a thought process which is geared towards others in an effort to imaginatively understand them. Internal phantasy continues to take precedent over external reality in this position, with objects being experienced as damaged by aggressive phantasies regardless of 'true' states of affairs. Klein followed Freud in her notion that the mind is constantly striving to express unconscious instincts, even when it attains the 'openness to experience' characteristic of the depressive position (Rayner 1991:24). As Hanna Segal describes in her description of phantasy, the psychological mechanisms that are thought to underlie the experience of phantasy are those of projection, introjection and projective identification: those unconscious movements towards expelling the bad and equating it with environment (which then comes back to haunt the subject in full force) or internalizing the good and seeing it as part of the self (Segal 1991). By extension, the depressive position cannot in itself capture 'reality oriented' imagining.

### **Bion: Knowledge as an Emotional Relationship**

Klein's notion of projective identification was transformed significantly by her disciple Wilfred Bion (Bion 1962/1984). Bion can be credited for enhancing the role of the external environment in psychoanalytic theory and bringing epistemic issues to the forefront through his theory of 'K' (and its negative '-K') (Bion 1962/1984: 47-49, 68). In particular, it will be useful to consider his notions of projective identification, the

'container' and the 'contained' and how 'K' (roughly equated with knowledge and knowing) is granted a role in psychological transformation (Bion 1962/1984: 91).

Bion's reformulation of Klein's projective identification allows for a greater degree of genuine interaction between mental states and the environment. In the following quote, for example, he demonstrates how he transforms Klein's theory of projective identification as a form of omnipotent phantasy into a mode of experience where both the subject and the object are transformed by the process of projective identification. In doing so, he introduces his own concepts of the 'container' and the 'contained':

The activity we know as "thinking" was in origin a procedure for unburdening the psyche of accretions of stimuli and the mechanism is that which has been described by Melanie Klein as projective identification. The broad outline of this theory is that there exists an omnipotent phantasy that it is possible to split off temporarily undesired, though sometimes valued, parts of the personality and put them into an object (Bion 1962/1984: 31)

He continues, outlining the possibility that one can unconsciously coerce reality to act in accordance with phantasy:

It is also possible, and in fact essential, to observe evidence which shows that a patient in whom the operation of this omnipotent phantasy can be deduced is capable of behaviour which is related to a counterpart in reality of this phantasy. The patient, even at the outset of life, has contact with reality sufficient to enable him to act in a way that engenders feelings in the mother that he does not want, or which he wants the mother to have (Bion 1962/1984: 31).

In ‘good enough’ circumstance, whether in development or analysis, the container/contained relationship can be a productive union. Later in the same work, Bion asserts: “Container and contained are susceptible of conjunction and permeation by emotion. Thus conjoined or permeated or both they change in a manner usually described as growth” (Bion 1962/1984: 90).

Bion uses these concepts considerably in his understanding of the analytic situation and his account of psychic change. His notion of container/contained is clearly that of an interpersonal relationship, with each element granted the potential to genuinely impact the other. It is within this context that Bion introduces the role of knowledge and knowing through ‘K’, where ‘K’ is understood as an *act of linking* within a relationship (Bion 1962/1984:47). Far from the dispassionate grasp of declarative facts, Bion believed that ‘knowing’ at its core was a primitive experience which is “an emotion on par with love (L) or hate (H)” (Stein 1999: 100). Containment by another is essential for knowledge as it is the means through which primitive emotional experiences can coalesce into *thinking* (Bion 1959: 314, 1962/1984:31). Bion’s theory of the interpersonal nature of *thought itself* therefore represents a drastic move away from the Freudian secondary process which, as we saw in the previous chapter, lies closer to the solitary dispassionate rationality of Cartesian or Kantian philosophy.

For the purposes of the current argument Bion’s thinking is useful in several ways. Pertaining to the argument presented in this thesis as a *whole*, we can see that Bion’s conceptualization of thought as an interpersonal activity can be integrated into evolutionary theories about the co-operative nature of reasoning and language (Csibra & Gergely 2009; Fonagy et. al. 2017a, 2017b, see Chapters Five and Eight for a full exposition). His notion that knowledge ‘K’ stems from an emotionally

primitive place in the same manner as love (L) and hate (H) may be helpfully applied to the notion of epistemic trust (see Fonagy et. al. 2017a, 2017, Introduction 'Part Two' and Chapter Seven) in which the right emotional environment is needed in order for knowledge and curiosity about minds and communication to flourish. These issues will be returned to in due course.

In terms of the argument presented in this chapter, which aims to demonstrate how shifts in psychoanalytic theory have created a natural demand for a theory of the imaginative which is 'reality oriented' and contains an epistemological dimension. Bion, it can be argued, not only grants 'K' a greater place in his metapsychology than Klein granted the 'epistemophilic' instinct, but also changed its stimulus. Where Klein followed Freud in seeing curiosity as a drive concerned with sexuality and bodily functioning (Klein 1928), Bion granted it a much broader psychological function (Bion 1962/1984). His theory of containment shifts Klein's characterisation of knowledge as a form of sadistic possession operating from the 'inside out' and instead shows that it can perform a regulating functioning from the 'outside in' (Bion 1962/1984: 98-99). In line with Bion's claim that he has "suggested an emended version of Freud's pleasure principle theory that the reality principle should be considered to operate co-existentially with the pleasure principle" (Bion 1962/1984:31), the notion of containment places the drive for knowledge in an intermediary zone between the pleasure and reality principles.

It also shows how being known and understood by another can fundamentally impact the subject's mind. While Bion tends to assign the role of the 'container' (understandably) to the analyst, he can also be seen to capture something about reflective functioning which in turn informs our conception of the 'reality oriented' imagination. When in a state of imaginative engagement with reality (in a state of

'reality oriented' imagining) the subject is open to acting as a container for others. While they do not necessarily need to *enact* this ability, it may be an important feature of healthy conscious life that it remains a potential (see Allen & Fonagy 2006: 45). One who could not act as a container for others, it could be argued, may be 'reality oriented' in the limited sense that their experience is veridical (rather than delusional) but this does not in itself amount to healthy imaginative engagement. This highlights another important divergence between the 'reality oriented' imagination and the Freudian Reality Principle, which would not consider the lack of ability to contain another as a psychological deficit.

### **Pathologizing Reality: The Developmental Theories of Fairbairn and Winnicott**

Although Klein transformed the Freudian mind into an entity with a greater degree of structure, reality-orientation and focus on interpersonal affairs, it nevertheless remains a species of instinct theory which construes the imagination as generated by an internal stimulus – the instincts – which then come to cloud the subject's experience of the external world with aspects of internal life (Segal 1991). Thus 'internality' remains pathologised, and a clear vision of 'external reality' the cure. Bion, while he greatly expands the role of external reality, grants it an interpersonal orientation *and* recognises epistemic issues as important, continues to see internal reality as inherently under threat of disorder. As a result, he portrays internal experience as requiring structuring from without (Bion 1959). The key difference between Bion and Freud in this regard, of course, is that Freud considered reality itself (or, more specifically, our *experience* of reality itself) as an impersonal experience organised according Kantian constructs and therefore imposing an inherent 'rational structure' on thought (Freud 1915a). Bion, in contrast, places the structuring forces *within another's* subjectivity.

Neither of them, however, adopt the much more radical proposal most famously asserted by Donald Winnicott that compliance to reality itself constitutes a form of sickness (Winnicott 1971/2005). On Winnicott's view, as I shall unpack shortly, pathology is not located within the self to be cured from the outside nor an instance of internal factors eclipsing a subject's access to (and engagement with) the external world. Rather, pathology can just as easily take the form of the external world drowning out an internal world constituted by a sense of self and spontaneity (Winnicott 1971/2005: 71- 87). As I shall explain shortly, Winnicott is the first analyst to assert that 'internality' risks being 'too little' as well as 'too much' and 'too structured' as opposed to 'disordered' (as we see in Bion) in a manner that was not a prominent worry for the analytic thinkers discussed so far.

Before we turn to an in depth look at Winnicott's pivotal role in establishing the 'reality oriented' imagination, it will be necessary to consider another thinker who preceded him: Ronald Fairbairn (1952/1994). Fairbairn is an important thinker to consider in the current context for his conceptualization of an internal world that is *simultaneously strategic and compensatory*. As a result he presents an interesting picture of the connection between imagination and psychopathology that is distinct from those proposed by Freudian and Kleinian analysts. For the purposes of the current argument, Fairbairn can be credited with providing a new understanding of human motivation that pre-empts many of the theoretical propositions of attachment theory<sup>19</sup> (Grotstein & Rinsley 1994).

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<sup>19</sup> Fairbairn's contributions were arguably undervalued and misunderstood in his own time. It has been argued that his 'complete rejection' of Freud's structural theory led to an 'almost phobic avoidance' of the deeper implications of his ideas, as many analysts who were his contemporaries were so steeped in classical metapsychology that they could find no space for Fairbairn's unique insights into the nature of the self (see Grotstein & Rinsley 1994). The fact that the psychoanalytic landscape was saturated in Freudian terminology only confounded the issue, as Fairbairn writes in 'Freudian language' referring to 'objects' 'libido'

Fairbairn was revolutionary for his time in his image of man as essentially a social creature who seeks affectional bonds as a primary aim (Fairbairn 1952/1994). Throughout his writings he argues that psychopathology arises from the (inevitable) failures in the relationships with early caregivers, coupled with the internal attempts to compensate for these, which often led to the development of both schizoid tendencies and a bad self-image derived from the internalisation of bad objects. Through analysis, the patient can hope restore their capacity for “making direct and full contact with real other human beings”. (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983: 156)

From the start of life, Fairbairn argued, the infant is object seeking, motivated by his extreme dependence on caregivers. In stark contrast to Freud’s notion that the goal of the organism is attaining pleasure through the discharge of the drive (with even the reality principle being employed with the ultimate aim of achieving pleasure), Fairbairn devised a model of the mind that centred on the notion of a ‘self’ or ‘selfobject’ which is inevitably bound up in relationships with others. He replaced Freud’s psychosexual stages with a psychological journey from complete ‘infantile dependence’ with its inherently asymmetrical structure of one-way dependence towards ‘mature dependence’ which involves a mutual, reciprocal bond with another (Fairbairn 1952/1994: 42).

Fairbairn did not deny that infant’s exhibit pleasure-seeking behaviour but he believed that signs that the pleasure principle is operating as an end in itself (the way that Freud would have conceived) should be taken as evidence of deviation from the standard developmental pathway:

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and ‘the ego’ while granting these terms wildly different meanings to Freud. This, it has been argued, led to rife confusion about the content of Fairbairn’s theory despite attempts made by Fairbairn to clarify his terms.

Explicit pleasure-seeking has as its essential aim the relieving of the tension of libidinal need for the mere sake of relieving this tension. Such a process does, of course, occur commonly enough; but, since libidinal need is object need, simple tension-relieving implies some failure of object-relationships (Fairbairn 1952/1994: 140).

In order to account for the existence (and extreme attractiveness) of pleasurable feelings, Fairbairn hypothesised that they serve to 'signpost' the individual to the object but that pleasure as an end in itself leads the individual down a developmental cul-de-sac.

The mind, for Fairbairn, centres on the behaviour of the external object to such a degree that the object determines the extent to which an internal, compensatory world of phantasy is developed at all. It is only when interpersonal relationships fail and disappoint that internal 'object relations' are formed: the unbearable ambivalence caused by disappointing relationships results in the splitting and incorporation of the 'badness' of the object into the self, to preserve the connection with a rejecting but needed caregiver (Fairbairn 1952/1994). Fairbairn believed that the extent to which an internal world of object relations is created has a negative correlation with how satisfactory genuine relationships are experienced to be, so that the greater the sense of external disappointment, the more invested the individual becomes in internalised objects (Fairbairn 1952/1994: 62).

Fairbairn's theory could therefore be seen as a mirror image to Freud's in two respects: in terms of the contents of the wish-fulfilling unconscious and in terms of the conditions which create the need for wish-fulfilling representations in the first place. Where Freud believed that the representational content of wish-fulfilling states



is concerned with bodily instincts, Fairbairn saw them as focused on real external relationships (Freud 1905b, Fairbairn 1952/1994). Furthermore, where the Freudian unconscious is generated by the physical needs which are not being met, Fairbairn considers the generation of an internal world as a response to an unsatisfactory interpersonal environment (Freud, 1911, Fairbairn 1952/1994). It is a complete rejection of Freud's Darwinian concept of man which allows for such a unique theoretical system. Yet he remains loyal to his Freudian and Kleinian legacy in an important regard: Fairbairn's understanding of the internal world as, in essence, a form of compensation for the external world mirrors Freud's core model of the primary process wish-fulfilling hallucination. This has far-reaching consequences: where Freud and Klein believed that psychic life came into being as a means of adapting to an internal world of instincts, Fairbairn saw the mind as created in an attempt to compensate for the failings of the outside world (Grotstein & Rinsely 1994). While the content of the internal world, for Fairbairn, is negative in so far as it is populated by bad objects, the internal world of the instincts is not *itself* the root cause of psychopathology (Fairbairn 1952/1994: 63-64). Fairbairn therefore can be seen to provide a half-way house between traditional object relations and attachment theory. He recognises that the importance of the external environment in early functioning leads to a strategic rather than wish-fulfilling internal world, yet the strategy employed by the individual does not serve to predict the caregiver's behaviour per se but rather to exonerate them on a moral level. In this sense, it is still a form of compensatory imagining which seeks to disassociate the individual from reality.

### **The ‘Reality oriented’ Imagination as a Transitional Phenomenon**

It can be argued that Winnicott’s theory of psychopathology and development lies closer to the mentalization model than those of any other psychoanalytic thinker discussed so far (see Fonagy et. al 2002 253- 291). For instance, Winnicott places a great deal of emphasis on how an individual subjectively experiences ‘the self’ and links this experience of selfhood explicitly with the quality of ‘mirroring’ provided by the caregiver during early developmental years (Winnicott 1971/2005: 71-86).

Although he was not expressly concerned with epistemological issues, his general account of mental functioning and psychopathology consists of a general worldview (one could say a ‘metapsychology’ although Winnicott himself eschewed this kind of technical terminology) which underpins the account of ‘reality oriented’ imagining proposed in this project. Across his works Winnicott builds up a nuanced picture of infantile and childhood psychological growth in which he grounds the capacity for a ‘creative’ relationship to reality in a smooth and attenuated relationship with the caregiver (Winnicott 1971/2005:109). Much like Bion and Fairbairn, Winnicott assigns the external environment an impactful role in psychological development, with the ability of the caregiver to sustain an illusion of the infant’s omnipotence and agency tied directly to the infant’s capacity for uncovering a creative ‘true’ self. He also provides a compelling account of the baby’s discovery of an external environment which is genuinely independent of the mind, which I have argued makes his open to the form of epistemic concerns discussed here (Winnicott 1971/2005:116-127).

Although still primarily concerned with the internal representations of early object relations, Winnicott was far more sympathetic to the role of the external environment than Klein, seeing the caregiver’s actual behaviour as playing an important role in

bringing the infant into genuine contact with the world of external object relations (Winnicott 1971/2005:150-151). In the early stages of life, Winnicott argues, the infant is unaware of a discrete 'self', but experiences self, object and world as one undifferentiated unity (Winnicott 1971/2005)<sup>20</sup>. This feeling of all-encompassing unity will be inevitably challenged as she grows and becomes alert to the external world. In 'good enough' circumstances, the mother will be sensitive enough to her baby's needs (she will be, Winnicott argues, in a state of 'primary maternal preoccupation') that she allows this illusion of omnipotence to continue and allow the baby to gradually accustom to a world outside the self.

Winnicott believed that the manner in which the infant comes to recognise and make use of objective reality in relation to her internal world lays the groundwork for various forms of healthy and pathological functioning. In "Mind and its Relation to the Psyche-Soma", for instance, he sketches various stances that the developing infant can take in relation to her body and the external world which can establish lifelong patterns of relating and experience. In Winnicottian theory the understanding of a self and of the distinction between internal and external realities are linked, with the self being the entity which (in good-enough circumstances) can help forge a connection between the internal world and the external environment (Winnicott 1971/2005). Winnicott considered the 'creative self' to be the product of a developmental history in which the caregiver sensitively responds to the infant's needs without being intrusive and impeding a sense of personal expression (by, for instance, curtailing their baby's impulses by substituting them for their own). At the

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<sup>20</sup> This is not, therefore, a narcissistic stage in the sense that the infant believes the object exists *for the self* but rather a state in which the infant *cannot differentiate* various aspects of physical, sensory and emotional experience well enough for the notion of a separation between self and not-self to take hold.

very beginning of life, creative gestures manifest in physical bodily movements. Winnicott, for instance, considered thumb sucking after feeding a creative gesture because it is an expression that is the baby's own. It may also be, as Klein would argue, accompanied by a phantasy of taking in milk, but this is not where its psychological significance lies. Winnicott can therefore be credited with creating a genuine role for the external environment that simultaneously emphasises the contribution of an internal self. In this regard, he draws up a sound blueprint for later empirical approaches such as those discussed in the following chapter.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter I have aimed to account for the changing role of imaginative processes in psychoanalytic theory by arguing that psychoanalysis has gradually changed the manner in which it conceptualizes the relationship between the subject and the external world. The theoretical changes that I have aimed to capture can be seen to work analogously with the increased emphasis on epistemic concerns that have arisen as a result of the greater integration of psychoanalysis and empirical science, which will be the focus of the next chapter. The resulting picture is one in which we can capture the notion of imaginative processes as 'reality oriented' from both empirical and non-empirical points of view. In what follows, I will turn to unpacking the 'reality oriented' imagination in greater depth by outlining how epistemological concerns can be applied to dreams, psychological symptoms and language.



## **Chapter Four**

### **The ‘Epistemic Turn’: Naturalizing the Imagination, Naturalizing the Mind**

In Chapter Two of this work, I provided a philosophically inspired contextualization of Freud’s theory of the imagination, arguing that he implicitly adopts the view that imagination is aligned with sensory processes and therefore excluded from the ‘thinking’ mind (Sartre 1936/2012). This results in a picture of imaginative functioning which is enigmatically excluded from the ‘system conscious’ (in spite of the fact that it is *descriptively* conscious) because it adopts many of the principles of primary process unconscious functioning (Freud 1900, 1907). The upshot of this, for the purposes of the current argument, is that the imagination is a form of compensatory wish-fulfilment which, as a result of its natural talent for deception, often works as an *obstacle* to knowledge<sup>21</sup>.

While the Freudian account may still chime with our intuitive understanding of rational thinking and acts of fantasy, it is arguably outdated and unhelpful as a psychoanalytic model. Framing imagination and ‘thought’ as opposing, battling forces is a position which is hard to square up with current views from empirical science, philosophy and, most importantly, from within psychoanalytic theory itself (see Clark 2016; Cavell 1993, 2006, Fotopoulou et. al. 2012). As we have already seen from the brief exposition of the mentalization model given in the Introduction, the imagination has the potential to be viewed, among other things, as *constitutive*’ of *reflective thought* rather than its antithesis (Fonagy & Luyten 2009:1362)

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<sup>21</sup> Somewhat paradoxically, imaginative experiences can become instances of self-knowledge only on the condition that they are transformed from imaginative experiences into something else, namely secondary process thought structures (Freud 1915a).

Understanding the transformation from the Freudian notion of the imagination as a fantastical, 'reality indifferent' act of daydreaming to the notion of the 'reality oriented' imagination exemplified in the mentalization model, requires investigation from a couple of perspectives. The first involves looking at how shifts internal to psychoanalytic theory itself have set prime conditions for a new theory of the imaginative to emerge. In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that psychoanalytic theory reliably shows evidence of becoming 1.) increasingly interpersonal and 2.) increasingly focused on the impact of genuine external circumstances of the individual. These factors, I will demonstrate, combine to create a view of the imagination as a positive force which enables the individual to transcend a set of concrete circumstances in a manner that facilitates emotional and social learning<sup>22</sup>. Understanding the role of the imagination in this way dramatically reverses the Freudian perspective in which the imagination is presented as being both created *by* internal factors and then focused narcissistically *onto* the internal world (e.g. Freud 1907).

### **Naturalizing Psychoanalysis**

Unlike the majority of post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the notion of the 'reality oriented' imagination which I am proposing is grounded in two models which are unapologetically empirical: the mentalization model and neuropsychanalysis. The empirical status of these modes is important to recognise, both on a global level in terms of its general impact on psychoanalytic research as a whole and on a specific level for how it impacts our conceptualization of the imagination. The former issue is a task that lies far beyond the scope of the current project, although I will consider it

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<sup>22</sup> This form of imaginative attitude, I will argue, is also defined by the fact that it instantiates a phenomenal experience of the self-as-agent.

briefly in due course (also see Fotopoulo et. al 2012); the second is the central aim of this chapter. In what follows I will attempt to examine the impact of adopting insights from developmental psychology (e.g. Bowlby 1997) and the neurosciences (e.g. Panksepp 2010, 2012) on psychoanalytic understandings of the mind and psychopathology with a particular emphasis on how this encourages a new psychoanalytic approach to the imagination.

Contemporary empirical theories of mental functioning, such as those found in empirical psychology and the neurosciences, are *naturalistic* theories (Collin 2011). According to Finn Collin this entails that they are committed to the “view that reality is coextensive with nature and that, hence, human knowledge has no object beyond the natural realm” (Collin 2011: 1). Adopting a naturalistic perspective requires that one recognises: “There is no higher, transcendent sphere; in particular, the human mind (or “soul”) does not itself inhabit any such higher realm, nor does any aspect of man’s activities or thoughts bring him in contact with such higher spheres” (ibid). This is in sharp contrast to philosophers of mind such as Descartes and Kant (discussed earlier) who aimed to uncover *metaphysical* truths about human existence which they believed could not be uncovered through traditional scientific experimentation (Descartes 1641/1924, Kant 1791/1900/2007). According to a naturalist view, even philosophical approaches to the mind should aim to be consistent with an empirical understanding and therefore should not posit ontological entities that lie outside of the material realm (Collin 2011).

Despite Freud’s abandonment of the ‘Project’ and his recognition that he could not, at the time of writing, marry up his theories with neurophysiology, he nevertheless made it a priority to sketch the *kind of* theory that could reunite with empirical neuroscience once the relevant knowledge became available (Freud



1915a, 1915b). This set him aside from many prominent psychoanalysts who followed him (such as Klein, Winnicott and Fairbairn), who saw their line of work as simply *different in kind* to empirical science (Klein 1961). After years of divergence between psychoanalysis and science, Freud's desire for the formulations of psychoanalysis to someday reunite with their underlying neurophysiology seems hopeful. The theoretical school of 'neuropsychanalysis' has taken on the task of investigating the compatibility of Freudian theory and recent advances in neuroscience (Solms & Turnbull 2011), particularly pertaining to the psychological nature of perception, affect and dreaming (Hopkins 2012, 2016; Panksepp 2012).

Such an ambitious move brings with it issues of suitability as well as those of possibility: even if it can be done, *should* psychoanalysis be granted an empirical basis? Is it the kind of discipline that can be captured in empirical terms? Opinions on this front are strongly divided, with many arguing that psychoanalysis risks unpicking its own unique contribution to the human condition by merging with disciplines such as neuroscience and cognitive psychology (see Blass & Carmelli 2007, 2015; also see Gardner 2000 for a philosophical perspective). Furthermore, while Freud himself may have announced strong neurobiological ambitions (Freud 1915b, 1920; Sulloway 1979), his failure to make good on such promises set the trajectory for psychoanalytic theory to develop along a different track to scientific advancement throughout the twentieth century. Take, for example, the following quote from Melanie Klein:

It has to be kept in mind that the evidence which the analyst can present differs essentially from that which is required in physical sciences because the whole nature of psychoanalysis is different. In my view, endeavours to provide comparable exact data result in a pseudoscientific approach, because the

workings of the unconscious mind and the response of the psychoanalyst to them, cannot be submitted to measurement nor classified into rigid categories (Klein 1961: 12).

The fact that Klein, as a direct intellectual descendent of Freud, could positively assert such a sentiment may stand to highlight how little influence Freud's initial scientific aims have had on the growth of psychoanalysis as a discipline and a clinical practice. However, the potential benefits of allowing for a modern day consilience between psychoanalysis and empirical approaches may well outweigh the costs, especially in light of the direction towards affective and social concerns that neuroscience has taken since the 1990s (Cozzolino 2010: xiii- xiv, Solms & Turnbull 2011:6).

In outlining the tenets of naturalism, Finn Collin acknowledges that it impacts our stance on methodology as well as ontology:

It follows that all phenomena are to be investigated by the same methods that are brought to bear upon the humbler parts of the natural world. Naturalism thus canvasses a monistic claim both with respect to ontology and methodology, to the effect that the world is a uniform realm that must be explored with one and the same set of methods (Collin 2011:1).

Despite this, it is important to stress that aiming for unification of psychoanalytic and empirical approaches does not necessarily lead to the scenario, forewarned by Klein above, in which the therapeutic process is replaced by the dispassionate categorization of mental phenomena. Naturalized psychological and psychoanalytic theories are able to tolerate a notion of the mental as distinct from the physical. For the purposes of this thesis, therefore, the form of 'naturalization' that I will adopt is drawn

from a position known as ‘dual-aspect monism’. Philosopher Donald Davidson argues that all things are physical, but there are different ways of describing them. The mind can be described from a physical point of view and from the point of view of consciousness. This does not show that consciousness exists in its own right, independent from the physical brain, but that it can be usefully described using a different set of propositions. For example, one could describe another’s anger in terms of neuro-chemical changes or in terms of their speech and behaviour. Neither description is more or less accurate than the other, as they are aiming for different things.

As we saw throughout Chapter Two, Freud’s body of theoretical works seem to contain multiple and sometimes competing philosophies of mind (Livingstone-Smith 1999). It could be speculated that Freud, having been frustrated in his scientific endeavours designed his topographical and structural models as “theoretical fictions” because it was the only way he could move psychoanalysis forward. In his 1915 paper “The Unconscious” he is explicit about this change in approach, stating “our psychical topography has for the present nothing to do with anatomy; it has reference not to anatomical localities, but to regions in the mental apparatus” (Freud, 1915:175). Contemporary empirical psychoanalytic models, it can be argued, should be seen as adopting a philosophical framework which allows for the co-existence of physical and mental descriptive languages. Despite the fact that they are grounded in empirical findings, these are not committed to either reductive ontological or explanatory naturalism; both of which given precedence to the physical aspect of mental functioning.

Mark Solms and Oliver Turnbull emphasise in “What is Neuropsychanalysis?”, Freud himself would not have adhered to a philosophy of mind that neglected non-

material aspects of mental functioning as it was his “emphatic view, even as a neurologist (Freud, 1891), that the mind was not made up of static modules or boxes connected up by arrows. Instead, Freud saw the mind as comprising dynamic, fluid processes” (Solms & Turnbull 2011: 2).

In “The Significance of Consilience: Psychoanalysis, Attachment, Neuroscience and Evolution” Jim Hopkins (2015) argues that a more sophisticated approach to scientific reasoning adopts Bayesian predictive approach, in which scientific hypotheses are adopted as a means of explaining why observed phenomena behave as they do. As he explains:

Our hypotheses explain and unify data by integrating them into larger but hypothetical causal patterns—those produced (caused) by the causal mechanisms or processes that the explanations hypothesize. So such hypotheses explain why the data are as they are, in the sense that they enable us to see that the data are as we should expect them to be given the causal mechanisms and processes by which they are explained. And it is because a hypothesis enables us to see the data as expectable in this way that we accept that hypothesis as providing a good explanation of the data with which we are concerned (Hopkins 2015: 48).

According to Bayesian methodology, scientific reasoning does not consist in the straightforward observation of data but is a process in which we try to unite bits of observed ‘data’ together in a way that explains and predicts them (Hopkins 2012, 2015). The sign of a good scientific hypothesis, on this view, is that it renders the observed data expectable. (To take a mundane example, heated water boiling when it hits 100 degrees centigrade is an *expectable* event if the guiding hypothesis is

“water boils at 100 degrees” but not under the hypothesis “water boils at 200 degrees”.) Rather than naively reflecting ‘the way things are’, scientific hypotheses primarily function to enable us greater degrees of predictive accuracy (Hopkins 2012). This basic premise, Hopkins argues, can be used as a guiding mechanism for understanding a range of phenomena, from grand scientific theories regarding the movement of the planets to our day to day recognition and understanding of one another as fellow human beings (Hopkins 2015: 49-50, 62-64). Furthermore, this form of Bayesian reasoning mirrors the way that our brains process sensory data into a conscious experience of our environments (Friston 2012; Hopkins 2012, 2105; Clark 2016, see below), linking the structure of perception with the architecture of the scientific method. For the purposes of the current argument, this is worth noting for the manner in which it dissolves the hard line between scientific methodology and our spontaneous, everyday understanding of the world, drawing out how both are essentially *interpretive* exercises (Hopkins 2015).

### **Naturalization and the ‘Disenchanted’ Universe**

Western thought has seen an increased movement towards naturalized models throughout the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty first centuries. Collin explains this as follows:

*Naturalization* is the movement of thought towards naturalism. A movement of this kind has been a pervasive characteristic of European thought for two and a half millennia, a slow but inexorable drift away from an original dualist mode in European philosophy, and indeed of European thought in general, towards an ever more stringent naturalistic monism (Collin 2011:1).

This phenomenon has also been described as a process of 'disenchantment'.

Drawing on a notorious lecture by Max Weber in 1922, Kathleen Lennon offers the following account of the 'disenchanted universe':

Max Weber, speaking in 1922 characterised the world which it was the job of the scientist to describe as a world in the 'process of disenchantment'. In such a world, 'there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play ... one can ... in principle master all things by calculation... One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master [it]... But for Weber it was not only magical and mysterious forces which have no place in such a scientific world but also meaning and value. 'If these natural sciences lead to anything in this way, they are apt to make the belief that there is such a thing as the 'meaning' of the universe die out at its very roots' (Lennon 2010: 375).

A 'disenchanted universe' is one in which empirically grounded scientific practice has championed over theological and metaphysical speculation. It is described as 'disenchanted' because the external world is not construed as containing normative values (anything that could be described using terms such as 'right', 'wrong', 'moral' or 'valuable') as these are categories which do not submit to naturalistic classification (McDowell 1996). On this basis, many thinkers have argued that this species of disenchanted 'bald naturalism' should be rejected as a general worldview, as it does not leave space for human life shaped in terms of subjectivity or value (Lennon 2015; McDowell 1996).

Issues surrounding 'disenchantment' pose a particular challenge to naturalized psychoanalytic models, as such theories must inevitably touch on the subjective qualities of meaning and value (Graham 2013). Even if psychoanalytic theories

themselves refrain from commenting on what makes a 'good' or 'valuable' life, the fact remains that the target of their explanations (their *explanans*) are human beings who themselves will have shaped their internal world according to personal sets of meaning and value. Psychoanalysis, as an approach which straddles theory and practice, cannot afford to lose its grip on subjectivity in the search for an empirical foundation. Even Freud, who ostensibly aimed to capture subjectivity as 'scientifically' as possible, made it clear that he believed the majority of (what he defined as) imaginative activity was unhealthy and to be discouraged, while 'realistic' thought and, in particular, self-knowledge was to be championed (Freud 1907, Tauber 2010). The interpretive nature of the Bayesian Model can ameliorate this perceived tension between naturalistic and normative forms of explanation, as it offers an empirical account of the mind as a meaning making machine (Hopkins 2015). As will become evident from the discussion on 'active' perception below, it is an inevitable aspect of our perceptual machinery that we consistently grant our experience an explanatory structure (Clark 2016; McDowell 1996).

Although a satisfactory defence of disciplines such as 'neuropsychanalysis' is far beyond the scope of this thesis, it still seems safe to conclude that linking psychoanalysis with empirical disciplines is possible without side-lining its focus on subjective, psychological states or losing sight of its interpretive nature. Yet purpose of this chapter is not to justify the existence of naturalized psychoanalytic models, but to consider the impact that conceptual changes engendered by empirical advances have had upon our implicit understanding of mind, psychopathology and the role of the imagination. I will turn to this task now.

### **Empirical Advances and the ‘Epistemic Turn’**

Advances in our understanding of perception, affect and infantile development have the potential to influence psychoanalytic theory in a manner that encourages the introduction of epistemic concerns. In what follows, I will discuss this in terms of three highly important conceptual shifts: the replacement of ‘reason’ with prediction and strategy (Clark 2016; Hopkins 2012, 2015), ‘drive’ with affect (Panksepp 2010, 2012; Solms & Zellner 2012), and ‘unconscious phantasy’ with ‘unconscious schema’ or ‘internal working model’ (Bretherton 1992; Rees 2012). My argument will centre on one simple but highly important acknowledgement: that our perception of external environment does not consist of bare sensory givens but is itself infused with thought-like elements (Clark 2016; McDowell 1996; Raftopolous 2009). This recognition stems from Kant’s argument that the imagination is necessary in order for humans to experience a unified and coherent conscious experience that is situated in space and time (Kant 1781/1900/2007, see Chapter Two). Advances in our understanding of the mechanisms which underlie perception have shown that even sensory experiences such as visual perception are ‘cognitively penetrated’ (subject to influence and distortion by higher-order brain mechanisms) (see Raftopolous, 2009). This gives perception an ‘active’ rather than a ‘passive’ nature, collapsing the space between experiential sensation and conceptual thought which is (I have argued) relevant to an interpretation Freud’s juxtaposition between imagination and thought (McDowell 1996).

Drawing on recent work in perceptual neuroscience, especially that which has been employed in the neuropsychanalytic literature (e.g. Solms 2013, Hopkins 2016), I will adopt the current dominant hypothesis that perceptual consciousness is the result of the brain generating a predictive model of its environment. Adopting this



view of perception, referred to as the “Bayesian Brain” (Hopkins 2012, 2015) or, more generally “Predictive Processing” (Clark 2016), has several knock-on effects which rather dramatically alter Freud’s theory of the imagination as a psychological process governed by the pleasure principle, stemming from the fact that that mental activity is driven from the bottom up by the need to predict (Clark 2016). The only change that this shift does not directly influence is the movement from ‘drive’ to ‘affect’. Nevertheless, it shall become evident below that this shift also engenders a heightening of epistemic concerns. After I have considered the three changes in some detail, I will conclude by exploring how they impact the subject’s epistemic relationship to her environment and offer a preliminary sketch of how this can suggest a revised notion of imagination so that it may contain a healthy as well as a pathological dimension (McDowell 1996).

### **Kant Revisited: ‘Active’ Perception and the Predictive Mind**

The existence of an active combining mechanism was acknowledged in neuroscience from the time that Freud was developing the roots of psychoanalysis. Most notably, Hermann van Helmholtz and Theodore Meynert, both of whom directly influenced Freud’s work, argued that Kant (discussed previously) had hit upon fundamental truths about brain operations in his attempt to create a transcendental metaphysics (see Makari 2008). This, George Makari has argued, could have been derived in turn from Schopenhauer’s interpretation in which he argued that Kant “showed everything that makes real perception possible, namely space, time and causality, to be brain function. He refrained however, from using this physiological expression, to which our present method of consideration necessarily leads” (Makari 2008: 554; Schopenhauer 1844: 285). This reading of Kant flattens out the transcendental aspect of his metaphysics, seeing him less as philosopher in the

strict sense and more as a thinker who intuitively pre-empted later scientific findings (Allison 2004). It is therefore a prime example of naturalization and its impact on the content of theories which undergo this change (see Collin 2011).

The theoretical claims of neuropsychanalysis are grounded in a similar model of perception to that which Freud would have been exposed to via Helmholtz and Meynert, derived ultimately from Kant (Hopkins 2012, 2015). As Jim Hopkins explains in his recent paper “Psychoanalysis, Representation and Neuroscience: the Freudian Unconscious and the Bayesian Brain”:

Helmholtz wrote in a tradition founded by Immanuel Kant (1781). His neuroscientific work partly embodies Kant’s idea that we can see our basic concepts (Laurence and Margolis, 2011)—that is, our basic but everyday ways of thinking of space, time, substance, objects, events, and the relation of cause and effect—as performing an unconscious synthesis of the “manifold” of sensory intuition (...) This philosophical perspective, at once straightforward and profound, has been carried forward via Helmholtz, Hinton, Friston, and others, into the conception of the Bayesian brain. (Hopkins 2012: 236).

While the neuroscientific notion of ‘active’ perception was drawn, via Helmholtz, from Kant’s notion of the *productive imagination*, I will not be equating ‘active’ perception with my proposed construct of the ‘reality oriented’ imagination in this thesis. This is because, from a psychoanalytic point of view, ‘active’ perception is not enough *in itself* to capture what it means to be in a state of psychological health. In contrast to psychoanalytic constructs such as mentalization’s ‘reflective functioning’ and Winnicott’s ‘creativity’, which aim to denote a particular mind-set towards self and

others, 'active' perception merely describes a basic, universal feature of brain functioning which remains intact in most instances of psychopathology<sup>23</sup>.

Nevertheless, the recognition that perception contains 'active' elements is an essential step in sketching a sound picture of 'reality oriented' imagining. As we saw previously, Kant's 'Copernican revolution' repositioned the imagination as a mediating force between the subject and the environment, replacing the classic notion that it is an *intrapsychic* mediator between perception and thought (or 'intellection') (Modrak 2016). In doing so, he opened up space for imagination to be *constitutive* of knowledge, rather than an obstacle to it and highlighted the fact that all mental activity is essentially interpretive. More importantly, the 'reality oriented' imagination is based upon psychoanalytic models which themselves incorporate 'active' perception. Neuropsychoanalysis, attachment theory and the mentalization model are all empirically minded schools of thought which not only implicitly adhere to the notion of 'active' perception but actively rely on it (Bretherton 1992; Crittenden & Landini 2011; Hopkins 2015). For example, attachment theory presents a young child's formation of 'attachment narratives': internal schemas which are used to interpret and explain caregiver's behaviour in a manner that *renders it predictable* (Bowlby 1997; Fonagy et. al 2002; Gopnik 2009). The mentalization model incorporates the notion of active perception via attachment theory (which it adopts as a general developmental framework) and also, arguably, in the interpretative

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<sup>23</sup> Even in extreme cases such as the psychotic delusional states experienced in schizophrenia it is likely that what is occurring is that the predictive element in perceptual systems has started to work incorrectly e.g. by making predictions based on the wrong sorts of sensory clues. It therefore represents a case of 'active' perception gone wrong, not one in which it is conspicuously absent from the subject's experience (see Clark 2016: 207- 209).

organisation of facial expressions and observable behaviour in terms of the underlying mental states they represent (Schuwerk et. al. 2016).

It will therefore be of prime importance to outline the notion of active perception in more depth. My focus will not lie on a satisfactory neuroscientific defence of the concept, which has received ample attention elsewhere (e.g. Raftapoulos 2009) but in drawing out the impact that this has on a psychoanalytic conception of the imagination. I hope to show that the conceptualization of perception as ‘active’ and ‘thought-like’ can be seen to challenge a couple of key assumptions that are integral to Freud’s theory of the imagination. Firstly, it demonstrates how imaginative activity can be oriented towards the external world in a way that enlightens rather than obscures an individual’s relationship to it. Secondly, it challenges Freud’s notion that visual thought should be excluded from the ‘system conscious’ as a consequence of being a non-linguistic form of representation. Although it could be argued that a salient difference can be maintained between linguistic and non-linguistic thought (for instance, we saw briefly earlier that mental imagery may not be a suitable vehicle for forming *thoughts about thoughts* (Bermudez 2003)), the concept of ‘active perception’ can be seen to challenge some of the qualities that Freud projects onto the image; perhaps most notably its concrete, non-symbolic nature. One result of ‘active’ perception is that images do not migrate into the mind as isolated fragments or ‘things’ (which can, at best, be strung together associatively) but that visual scenes are structured according to *concepts* which can be manipulated according to logical ‘thought-like’ rules (Clark 2016; McDowell 1996). To borrow a phrase from earlier in this work, it could be argued that active perception creates an arena in which mental images can ‘behave like language’ (see Chapter One).

## The Face-House Experiment

Within neuropsychanalysis in particular, the “face-house experiment” is often used to provide a clear example of how the brain creates a conscious perceptual experience from a predictive hypothesis (Hopkins 2012). In this experiment, a picture of a house is projected onto a participant’s right eye and a picture of a face is projected onto their left eye, with the result that they have the phenomenological impression of a face gradually turning into a house, and then gradually back into a face again. This occurs because the brain ‘knows’, from experience, that there is no such thing as a “face-house”, so it uses the visual data available in the right eye to conclude that it is looking at a face and suppresses the contradictory data coming in from the left eye. This succeeds momentarily, but there is so much contradictory data (it makes up half of the visual field)<sup>24</sup> that the brain is forced to change its hypothesis, and concludes that it is seeing a house. The cycle repeats, creating the undulating image for the participant. In more technical terms, undulating image embodies a tension between the brain’s ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ mechanisms. ‘Top down’ mechanisms act to inhibit any incoming sensory data which contradicts the brain’s dominant hypothesis, whereas ‘bottom-up’ mechanisms flag up errors in ‘top-down’ hypothesis (they draw attention to anomalies) with the hope of updating these predictions so that they more accurately represent the entire range of incoming data (Hopkins 2012:11, 2016:4). The undulating image occurs as a result of perceptual system attempting to manoeuvre the contradictory incoming data as well as it can in an attempt to reduce the chance that it will be ‘surprised’ by the environment (see ‘Prediction as Regulation’ below).

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<sup>24</sup> This contradictory data, it is important to note, does not exist as a *competing representation* (as it operates at levels prior to representations being formed) but is rather a type of *error signal* (Clark 2016: 46)

The face-house experiment may explain why individuals appear to act with unified intentions despite the fact that they experience mental conflict, because it demonstrates how conflicting information can be suppressed outside of awareness, compelling us to conclude that the mind engages in the repression of its own contents (see Hopkins 2012). It also offers a clear example of how conscious states are created by predictive hypotheses: when the individual has the experience of seeing a face, this is simply a product of the brain's *prediction that she is seeing a face*. Far from being the passive reception of incoming sense data, conscious experience not only contains cognitive elements but is the *result of a prior cognitive hypothesis* (Hopkins 2012; Clark 2016). In this sense, the Bayesian model goes above and beyond the Kantian principle that imagination is a schema under which a set of empirical data can be unified: it demonstrates how the brain actively generates perceptual experiences from an initial cognitive premise.

### **Prediction as Regulation**

Although it must be acknowledged that this approach, championed by neuroscientists such as Karl Friston (2012), is based on computational models which Freud could not possibly have worked with (Hopkins 2016:2), it nevertheless shares deep conceptual similarities with Freud's differentiation of the primary and secondary processes as describing the tension between 'unbound' and 'bound' psychic energy respectively (Hopkins 2012: 12). As we have seen, in The 'Project' Freud proposes that the secondary process has the function of 'binding' free flowing primary process energy in order to create representational 'maps' of the external world which links things together in a way that facilitates action by, for example, representing how a certain cause (such as a head movement towards the breast) leads to a certain effect (being able to feed) (Freud 1895/1950). Such action, for Freud, had the

potential to lead to the discharge of endogenous instinctual stimuli by the satiation of the drive, which he believed to be the ultimate end goal of the psychic apparatus (Freud 1895/1950) see also Chapter One).

Yet, unlike Freudian theory, the Bayesian account places epistemic uncertainty and its amelioration at the centre of psychic experience (Clark 2016). In order to generate sound predictive models the brain must not only aim to predict the cause of incoming sensory data but simultaneously evaluate how likely it that its prediction will be correct. Andy Clark explains this phenomenon (technically known as ‘precision weighting’) using the example of driving in the fog versus driving on a clear day: in the fog incoming sensory data will be ‘marked’ by the brain as less reliable than incoming sensory information on a clear day (Clark 2016 56- 57). This allows the driver to navigate a potentially dangerous situation by recognising that incoming sensory data needs to be approached differently in this context than it would, for example, on a clear day. The fact that perceptual models inherently take into account that they do not have direct access to ‘the way things are’ complicates the picture of ‘active perception’ put forward by earlier neuroscientists such as Helmholtz, as it demonstrates that the brain/mind ‘recognises’ (on a non-conscious, sub-personal level) that it is in an epistemologically vulnerable position. It creates a picture of brain functioning as growing around a core of epistemological uncertainty, the reduction of which is one of its most primitive driving mechanisms. This can be used to re-frame the conceptualisation of the ‘reality indifferent’ imagination (namely, its pathological form) as a force which compensates for a deficit *in understanding*, rather than deficits in instinctual satisfaction. For the time being, it is simply worth acknowledging how a neuropsychanalytic approach based upon the kind of

predictive processing model that Clark identifies cannot help but draw epistemological issues into our understanding of both health and pathology.

The naturalized account of Kantian metaphysics instantiated in ‘The Bayesian Brain’ therefore transforms Kant’s connection between imagination and knowledge from a transcendental philosophy to an account of everyday challenges faced by individuals as they come to understand and predict their environments. While Freud would have been familiar with the application of Kantian principles to perceptual neuroscience through the work of Theodore Meynert and Herman van Helmholtz, his own descriptions of the mechanisms perception arguably fall in line with the view that perception is the straightforward registration of incoming sense data (Schimek 1975, see Chapter Two). The fact that Freud adopted such a view of perception not only explains his presentation of the mental image as a *concrete ‘thing’* but can also account for his portrayal of the relationship between the individual and the external world as epistemologically straightforward (barring the inevitable intrusion of unconscious processes).

### **Reasoning below the Threshold**

There are several points that can be drawn from the face-house experiment that are highly relevant to a psychoanalytic conception of mind. The first of these worth considering is the manner in which it highlights the brain’s capacity to perform comparatively sophisticated cognitive functions prior to conscious experience. The neural mechanisms which underlie the generation of conscious representations do not line up neatly with Freud’s categorizations of processes into conscious, preconscious and unconscious. Like secondary process (conscious or preconscious) mechanisms they force representational content into clear, linear cause and effect sequences, yet like dynamically unconscious processes, and in direct opposition to



Freud's theory of the secondary process, they are by virtue of their very nature inaccessible to conscious awareness (Solms 2013).

Secondly, this experiment highlights the fact that a perceptual experience of seeing a face (rather than a house) is not the brain's *interpretation of* a conscious perceptual scene but rather the explanation it uses to *form* a conscious perceptual scene, presenting a picture in which we 'reason' our way to experience rather than reason *on the basis of* experience. While adopting a 'predictive processing' model of brain functioning does not preclude human beings engaging in rational deliberation about our experiences, it nevertheless highlights that such experiences are themselves *already* the product of an inference. This is highly significant for psychoanalytic understanding of pathology and its treatment, as it lays bare a form of 'unconscious reasoning' that cannot be altered by being made conscious<sup>25</sup>. For example, it is likely that attachment narratives (unconscious 'working models' used to interpret and predict interpersonal scenarios, see below for more detail) are the kind of automatic unconscious inference that cannot be directly modified by conscious reflective thought: being explicitly aware that one has an insecure attachment style will not change the fact (Bowlby 1997; Crittenden & Landini 2011).

Current research outlines how similar forms of sub-conscious reason may contribute to extreme forms of psychopathology such as psychotic delusions (Clark

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<sup>25</sup> As we saw in Chapter One, this is also not sufficient within a traditional Freudian paradigm: the act of translating primary process to secondary process structures must be accompanied by the release of appropriate affect in order for repression to be lifted. However, it remains a *necessary* aspect of change that the patient has declarative knowledge of their (previously) unconscious processes. In contrast, an individual reorganizing from an insecure to a secure attachment style does not need to have the accompanying declarative awareness that such a process is taking place (although some would argue that it can help). Analogously, those individuals who maintain a good sense of self through being effective mentalizers will be unlikely to be able to describe this process as such. difference in these two approaches to self-knowledge could be crudely interpreted according to the philosophical difference between 'knowing that' and 'knowing how'.

2016) and Capgras Syndrome (the persistent delusion that a loved one has been replaced by an imposter) (De Sousa 2008). For example, Andy Clark outlines a theory of psychotic delusions which draws on similar neural mechanisms to the face house experiment described above. In the experimental scenario, the undulating image is created by the fact that the unified scene of (for example) the face is disrupted by an error signal which alerts the brain to sensory information which does not fit the dominant hypothesis. In schizophrenic patients it has been suggested that these error signals are both falsely generated and then given an undue level of significance with the result that they can ‘force’ drastic changes in top-down interpretative theories in order to be accommodated<sup>26</sup>. For the individual who is at the mercy of such faulty ‘precision weighting’, interpretive theories which would strike the outside observer as paranoid and delusional such as “people can read my thoughts” and “the CIA are following me” become the only way in which information that the brain marks as both *reliable* and *unexplained* can be reconciled (Clark 2016: 206). Clark explains how this aetiology makes it difficult for schizophrenic patients to dissolve their delusions through a controlled, rational assessment:

What about the ‘obvious’ higher level explanation, which a friend or doctor might even suggest to an affected agent, namely, that the agent herself is cognitively compromised? This should indeed constitute an acceptable high-level explanation, yet it is one that severely affected subjects find unconvincing. In this context, it is worth noting that prediction error signals are not objects of (or realizers of) experience...The PP [predictive processing] suggestion is not that we experience our own prediction error signals (or their associated precisions)

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<sup>26</sup> I will also discuss this phenomenon in terms of ‘complexity reduction’ in Chapter Five (also see Hopkins 2016)

*as such*. Instead, those signals act within us to recruit the apt flows of prediction that *reveal* a world of distal objects and causes (Clark 2016: 207, emphasis added).

A similar form of ‘unconscious inference’ has been drawn on by Robert de Sousa in order to explain Capgras Syndrome, a persistent delusion in which a loved one is thought to have been replaced by an imposter. This highly specific form of delusion is thought to arise when the recognition of the loved individual becomes uncoupled from its usual attendant affective element. Taking this into account, de Sousa argues that:

The Capgras delusion is then no more than a perfectly reasonable inference (though of course one that is neither conscious nor explicit): I get a characteristic thrill when my father appears; I’m not getting that father-thrill now; therefore the person before me is not my father. Yet he looks exactly like my father. Therefore he is an impostor, a stranger who looks just like my father... But it is not experienced subjectively as an inference, but as *intuitive conviction* about the supposed father (de Sousa 2008 accessed online, emphasis added).

These examples, while they occupy a rather extreme end of a psychopathological spectrum, are essential in setting up a picture of the mind that is shaped, in both health and pathology, by the *need to render experience explainable and predictable*.

### **Crossing the Mind-Body Frontier**

Adopting a ‘predictive processing’ model of perception therefore dramatically alters many of Freud’s core assumptions about psychological motivation and the representations it produces. As will be familiar from Chapter One of this work, the most primitive form of representations which populate both infantile psychology and

the adult unconscious are taken to be imagistic and driven by an affective logic; they are the form of mental expression that lies closest to the drive (although they cannot be equated with it) (Freud 1890, 1923). Despite the fact that the drive cannot be definitively grasped as either a mental or a physical phenomenon, when the drive does break through into the mind it is prompted by its *need to discharge*, which it will attempt to do in the first instance by representing wishes as though they are being fulfilled (Freud 1895/1950, 1911). It is therefore the need for pleasure (under its particular Freudian definition of discharged tension) which drives mental activity from the bottom up. On this view, the mind is not concerned with knowledge until the reality process has set in. From a 'Bayesian' perspective, however, prediction is the driving force that prompts the jump from physical to mental activity. As Clark describes:

The mystery is, and remains, how mere matter manages to give rise to thinking, imagining, dreaming and a whole smorgasbord of mentality, emotion and intelligent action...But there is an emerging clue...The cue can be summed up in a single word: prediction. To deal rapidly and fluently with an uncertain and noisy world, brains like ours have become masters of prediction (Clark 2016: xiv).

On this view epistemic concerns are not a 'luxury' of sophisticated secondary process functioning but are built into the very foundations of mental functioning. Below I will discuss how this has impacted two areas that are central to psychoanalytic theorizing: affects and unconscious processing. One theme which will emerge, in particular regarding the discussion of affects, is how the 'predictive processing' model opens up space for the inclusion of *epistemic emotions* as a relevant concern in psychoanalytic theory of mind.

### The 'Conscious' Id:

Before turning to a discussion on the roles of unconscious schemas and affects in empirical accounts, I will first outline a seminal paper from the neuropsychanalytic literature which is highly relevant to both: Mark Solms' "The Conscious Id". This paper highlights how neuroscientific advances since Freud's time serve to challenge many core psychoanalytic assumptions regarding the structure of conscious experience. As the title of Solms' paper suggests, this transformation involves a reversal of Freud's postulation that the secondary process is inherently conscious and the 'drive' is inherently unconscious. For our current purposes, it will be a highly useful paper in demonstrating how secondary process mechanisms can (and often do) operate 'below the threshold of awareness' while simultaneously highlighting the important role of affect in phenomenal conscious experience. Solms aims to demonstrate that it is bodily affectivity rather than secondary process thought which forms the core of conscious experience, drawing on the recognition that the brain has two distinct means of representing and regulating the body: one which experiences the body from the inside out in a visceral manner and one which represents the body from the outside in as though it were an external object (Solms 2013: 6). In many ways, these two forms of bodily representation preserve important aspects of Freud's metapsychological writings on the experience of the body. As he writes in the *Ego and the Id*, for example:

A person's own body, and above all its surface, a place from which both internal and external projections may spring. It is *seen* like any other object, but to the touch it *yields* two kinds of sensations, one of which may be equivalent to an internal perception (Freud 1923: 26, emphasis in the original).

Solms' bipartite neuroscientific categorization can therefore be seen to line up with Freud's metapsychological formulations: the internal representation of the body, in contrast, is 'objectless' in a manner comparable to Freud's theory of the drive; it is a form of representation is made up of a series of affective 'states' that reflect whether the body's evolutionary needs (such as for food and sex) are being met or denied. While these 'affective states' draw on the full range basic core affect systems identified by Jaak Panksepp (Panksepp 2012, see below) they can generally be seen to obey Freud's Pleasure-Unpleasure Principle as their end goal is to provoke approach or withdrawal behaviour in the individual (Solms 2013:3).

Where Solms' approach drastically challenges Freudian assumptions is in the attribution of *phenomenal consciousness* to the internal bodily feeling but not to the external bodily representation. The internal form of bodily representation - the 'autonomic body' - is thought to be generated in the upper brainstem; an area of the brain which is inherently conscious. In contrast, external form of bodily representation - the 'sensorimotor' body (which appears to line up neatly with the Freudian ego) - is associated with cortical mechanisms which are inherently unconscious (Solms 2013:2). This can corroborates the argument presented above: rather than being a characteristic of conscious experience, organising processes are a prerequisite for conscious experience; a fact which might significantly impact how psychoanalytic theory understands the role of the secondary process (Solms 2013:10).

### **The Importance of Affect**

Solms' picture of brain functioning does not stop at the relegation of the secondary process into a subconscious state but actively *promotes* the affective basis of conscious experience. It does this, in the first instance, by showing how the

sensorimotor 'secondary process' is hierarchically dependent on the visceral 'autonomic' 'primary process'. Although in day to day life there is a two-way exchange of information between the systems that support autonomic and sensorimotor representations, sensorimotor perception cannot function if the areas of the brain which support autonomic representation (the brainstem and attendant limbic systems) are not functional. Autonomic representations, on the other hand, remain intact in humans and animals that have severe damage to areas of the brain that govern sensorimotor perception. As Solms' summarises: "the internal aspect is a prerequisite for the external aspect" (Solms 2013: 6).

In everyday functioning, autonomic representations use sensorimotor representations to get bodily needs met in the external environment, a set-up which has an uncanny similarity to Freud's proposal that the pleasure principle uses the reality principle as a means of effectively discharging psychic energy through real bodily satisfaction rather than hallucination. What Freud failed to account for, however, is that once bodily sequences have been tried and tested they fade out of conscious awareness because they no longer require awareness in order to be successful (Solms 2013:12). As is also emphasised in the Bayesian model of perception, conscious awareness is drawn towards aspects of the environment that are novel and unexpected so that they may be tested against the brains working predictive hypothesis (Clark 2016; Raftopolous 2009). Thus it is the fate of the majority of secondary process sequences to disappear from conscious experience once the brain and the body become adept at applying them. Autonomic awareness, on the other hand, is persistently conscious: it does not fade away once the individual has adjusted to it. This means that id not only functionally underpins the ego, it phenomenologically dominates it (Solms 2013:12).

### **From Phantasy to Schemas and Working Models**

Ellen Rees points out in her essay “Unconscious Phantasy and Schema: A Comparison of Concepts” (2012), that naturalized psychoanalytic models currently suffer from a lack of means of comparison between the psychoanalytic unconscious and the cognitive unconscious, which centre on the central nodes of unconscious phantasy and unconscious schemas respectively. The notion of unconscious phantasy (or primary process functioning) from both a Freudian and a Kleinian perspective has already been considered in some depth: it is an act of imagination in which the individual’s wishes are experienced *as though they are being satisfied* (Freud 1895/1950, 1911). Unconscious schemas, in contrast, have been described as follows:

A schema operates as a gestalt that can structure perceptions or images. It is not a template but a dynamic structure that organizes mental representations at an abstract level. Schemata of this kind operate preconceptually and unconsciously in different domains of experience, perceptual, sensory, affective, motor, and cognitive and so represent the body's experience of somatic functioning as well as the body's experience in space, time, gravity, and relationship with others (Johnson, 1987 quoted in Rees 2012: 9).

This definition of a schema draws on the work of psychoanalyst and infant researcher Daniel Stern (1985), who argues that, for infants, schemas are built up as a way of representing and understanding experiences before higher cognitive capacities emerge. Similar principles underlie John Bowlby’s theory of ‘internal working models’ within attachment theory, in which children build up naïve theories or working models in order to anticipate caregiver response so that they may act strategically to remain in as close (emotional) proximity as possible (Bowlby 1997;



Fonagy 2001). The following outline of Bowlby's internal working models by Inge Bretherton draws out their strategic dimension:

Bowlby (1969, 1973) defines internal working models of self and attachment figure(s) as dynamic representations with both cognitive and affective components. He derived the term from the writings of Craik (1943), a psychologist involved in the design of intelligent rocket guidance systems. Craik suggested that organisms that carried a small-scale model of reality in their head were thereby enabled to choose amongst alternative courses of action, and to react to anticipated situations before they arise. Bowlby was attracted to this idea of representation as simulation because it was compatible with the psychoanalytic concept of representation as an inner world (Bretherton 1992: 2).

As is well recognised within attachment research, such an approach leads to highly different working models across infants and young children who find themselves in different interpersonal situations (Crittenden & Landini 2011, Bowlby 1997, Fonagy 2001). For example, infants whose caregivers only respond to their distress once it reaches a certain threshold will find it more beneficial to strongly express their feelings than those infants who find themselves in the care of an individual who becomes rejecting (or stressed themselves) when faced with outpourings of negative affect. In the latter case, dampening down expressions of emotion will likely result in the caregiver remaining emotionally available, whereas in the former it will likely to lead to (perceived) indifference<sup>27</sup>. Within internal working models there is therefore a greater interplay between the individual and her environment than in phantasy,

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<sup>27</sup> A variety of approaches have been systematized into attachment styles or classifications (such as 'secure', 'insecure' 'disorganized') which can be drawn out in artificial research scenarios such as the 'Strange Situation' (for babies and young children), and the Adult Attachment Interview (for adults). These will be outlined and discussed in Chapter Six.

whose role is determined by internal, intrapsychic factors (Fonagy 2001). For the purposes of the current chapter, both the strategic nature of schemas or working models and their intrinsic focus on the external environment are worth noting because they demonstrate how even more primitive aspects of mental functioning have the aim of learning about the environment in order to anticipate it. While these 'lower' mechanisms may not do this as well as sophisticated conscious processes, their driving purpose nevertheless remains the same. This is essential in order to understand psychopathology as the mind's misguided attempt to 'double down' on its ability to accurately predict and represent the environment and, conversely, the healthy mind's capacity to be open to learning from novelty.

### **From Drive to Affect**

The second shift in emphasis that is relevant for an analysis of epistemological concerns in psychoanalysis is the movement away from 'drive' and towards 'affect' (Panksepp 2012, Solms & Zellner 2012). Psychoanalytic theory is often accused of having no satisfactory theory of affect, a fact which potentially stems from Freud's own failure to properly delineate affect from the drive (Enckell 2007). The explosion of empirical research into the nature and function of affects since the 1990s, particularly from a neuroscientific perspective, has enabled psychoanalytic theory to take affects as the well-spring of psychological motivation (Cozolino 2010). As Henrik Enckell argues:

Changes in our discipline's self-image have probably been especially clear during the last two decades. Partly, these changes may be an effect of influences from infant observation and the neurosciences. These adjoining fields

lean on systems theory, a paradigm that has perhaps influenced psychoanalysis to an extent not yet fully realized (Enckell 2007: 64).

He continues:

Two things seem to be typical of modern motivational theory. First, most psychoanalytic authors today see affects as the most important motivators. They may not deny the existence of the drives, but see these as secondary in importance (Lichtenberg, 1989; Westen, 1997; Sandler & Sandler, 1998) in motivation. Second, many authors-e.g., Lichtenberg (2001) and Kernberg (2001)- delineate a specific sequence in motivational evolvement. According to these writers, psychological motivation starts with the affect. (Enckell 2007: 66).

While a full discussion of affect theory is far beyond the scope of this discussion, I will consider two ways in which the replacement of drive with affect within the psychoanalytic taxonomy encourages the growth of an epistemic dimension in psychoanalytic theory. The first concerns *regulation*: Freud believed that the drive was regulated (satisfied) via a process of discharge when the need it represents is satiated in real life (perhaps the most clear-cut example being the discharge of hunger upon feeding). Affects, on the other hand, are regulated via *understanding* and *containment* (Fonagy et. al. 2002, Bion 1962/1984), processes which emphasise communication, understanding and knowledge over physical pleasure. The second concerns linking curiosity and a drive for learning to core psychological motivation. Seminal work on core affect systems by Jaak Panksepp produces a conceptualization of the mind (via the 'SEEKING' system) that is energized by curiosity and exploration rather than pleasure *per se* (Panksepp 2012 95 - 145).

Before we can consider both of these epistemic dimensions an important clarification is in order. While I am advocating for a change of *emphasis* from drive to affect, this should not be read as an argument that the notion of the drive can be cleanly replaced with notion of affect. Affects, especially under some descriptions, are not the same things as drives. As Solms and Zellner explain:

You never experience a drive directly. Frequently in the literature, drives are described as something that people *feel*; for example, it is said that the feeling of thirst drives people to drink water. It is as if the feeling *is* the drive. However, for Freud, the feeling of thirst is not itself a drive, which is not something you experience; rather, the concept of drive explains *why* you feel thirst when you need water. A feeling such as thirst is conceptualized by Freud as a 'drive derivative', a mental representation set in motion by the body's need. A drive is more fundamental, therefore, than an unconscious wish that already has representational content. Indeed, a drive is something prior to all such mental things—it is the force that gets the mind going. As such, from the mental point of view, drives are inferred entities, unconscious states of 'mind' (Solms & Zellner 2012: 6).

This also points to a potential confusion of terminology in regards to 'affects' themselves: the 'core affect systems' that Panksepp offers as a contemporary alternative for the Freudian drive are not the same as affects in the sense of *conscious feelings*, which (in humans) will always involve elements of higher order cognitive processes (Panksepp 2010, 2012). It is therefore important not to conflate the notion of 'core affects' with the kinds of subjective feeling states which, according to the 'mentalizing' perspective can be regulated via second order representations. For the purposes of examining the higher epistemic component of affects in

comparison to drives, this confusion should not be too potent. When drawing on Panksepp's notion of core affect systems, I will argue that the 'SEEKING' system can *give rise to* conscious feelings ('affects') that have an epistemic dimension such as curiosity (Panksepp 2012: 97-98).

### **Representation and Affect Regulation**

One of the core claims of attachment theory which sets it aside from instinct theory is its claim that the infant seeks proximity with the caregiver as an end in itself and not as a means of getting its instinctual needs met (also see Chapter Six for an extended discussion on this). As attachment theory has developed, it has adopted a less 'naively' realistic account of the impact of the interpersonal environment on infantile behaviour and come to appreciate that it is the individual's *representation of reality* which is important in the formation of attachment styles. This has been an important factor in the "softening of the impasse" (Slade 1999: 797) the unification of attachment theory and psychoanalysis and, for our purposes, emphasising the role of representation and understanding in affect regulation.

Following this, the mentalization model account of development is centred on the regulation of affective states via their *symbolic representation*, which is achieved first with the help of the caregiver and then (in 'good enough' circumstances) autonomously by the self (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 192). The capacity for 'reflective functioning' is established when the caregiver's sensitive mirroring of an infant's expressed affect is internalized by the infant to form a second order representation. In order for a robust mentalizing capacity to emerge, it is imperative that the caregiver's mirroring is experienced by the infant as *analogous but not identical* to their own affective experience. By marking the difference between their own and the infant's emotional state through bodily and facial cues (such as distortion and

exaggeration), the mother 'marks' that the emotions expressed are not her own but belong to the infant (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 192). Over time, the mother's facial expressions and gestures can be internalised as a mental *representations* used to symbolise the infant's state of mind without *being* that state of mind (Fonagy et al. 2002: 192). If the mother's mirroring is too close to the baby's subjective state, its *symbolic* quality will be lost: the infant will experience the mother's affect concretely which risks amplifying their emotional state (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 193)<sup>28</sup>. It is important to note here that the caregiver need not *explicitly* understand the infant's affective state in the sense that she has a declarative awareness of it. In fact, her mirroring is more likely to be intuitive expression of *implicit mentalizing*<sup>29</sup>. Nevertheless, it is a combination of successful understanding and its communication that allow the infant to self-regulate. Drives, by their very nature, do not permit regulation via this channel. While the focus on affects over drives does not in itself necessitate adopting the mentalizing account, it opens the door for an increased emphasis on representation.

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<sup>28</sup> It is as if, through her concrete mirroring, the caregiver is *confirming* the infant's emotional view of the world, rather than implicitly showing him his feelings belong to his mind *instead of* the world. Research seems to bear this hypothesis out. For instance, It has been found that mothers who mimic their babies pain following an injection interspersed with different emotive cues (such as mocking) managed to soothe their babies more effectively than those who simply mirror their baby's distress. On the same token, it has been suggested that individuals with panic disorders may interpret relatively mild physiological cues as signalling catastrophe because their metarepresentation of these signals are not far enough away from the original feelings of panic with the result that representing their emotional state leads to a cycle of amplification (rather than regulation) resulting in a seemingly unbearable state of mind (Fonagy et al 2002: 193- 198).

<sup>29</sup> This form of mentalizing is defined as non-verbal, intuitive and embodied and is thought to make up the vast majority of our mentalizing in day to day life (Fonagy & Luyten 2009: 1358).

### **The ‘SEEKING’ System: ‘Feeling Good’ as an Epistemic Emotion**

Another highly influential supporter of affect rather than ‘drive’ as providing motivation for human organisms comes from Jaak Panksepp’s ‘The Archaeology of Mind’ (Panksepp 2012). Throughout this work Panksepp reimagines Freud’s model of the primary and secondary processes in light of advances in affective neuroscience. He links our ultimate sources of motivation to a series of seven basic affects that are shared across mammalian species<sup>30</sup>. Although humans naturally experience a much higher degree of nuance and complexity in their emotional worlds than other mammals, coming to terms with the underlying core of internal experiences could shed light on pathologies of emotional experience, especially when these are constitutive of common forms of mental illness such as anxiety and depression (Panksepp 2010). Panksepp captures the impact of mammalian affect systems on human psychological experience by proposing a three-tiered model of the mind which contains primary, secondary and tertiary processes, suggesting that basic ‘primary process’ affects can be elaborated on by the ‘secondary processes’ which are descriptively unconscious brain mechanisms that allow for memory and learning. The content of these ‘secondary process’ mechanisms can, in turn be interpreted by ‘tertiary processes’ which allow for the uniquely human form of reflective consciousness in which one can reason about one’s experience (Panksepp 2012:80). Aside from providing robust empirical support for the presence of core motivational affect systems in humans (which cannot be satisfactorily covered here) Panksepp’s ‘SEEKING’ system is a particular useful construct for the current project.

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<sup>30</sup> These are (in no particular order): seeking, rage, fear, lust, care, panic/grief/separation and play (Panksepp 2012:35 – 37).

Although Panksepp's taxonomy of affects cannot be satisfactorily mapped onto Freud's metapsychological concepts, the 'SEEKING' system can be considered a rough equivalent of Freud's pleasure principle: it is the 'get up and go' driving force that compels the organism to engage with its environment (Freud 1911). Like the pleasure principle, 'SEEKING' is appetitive and is not concerned in itself with the limitations of reality: it spurs action regardless of consequence. Solms and Zellner express their agreement with the comparison between 'SEEKING' and the pleasure principle in the following passage:

The general pleasure-seeking tendency of the libidinal drive, which has a source and an aim but is inherently without an object, seems to correlate remarkably well with the 'objectless' action tendencies that Panksepp attributes to the SEEKING system. This system is an all-purpose system, activated by a variety of needs, that energizes forward-moving, foraging, and effortful behaviour aimed at any number of goals, rewards, or objects. As a behavioural process, therefore, we can think of SEEKING as the instinctual elaboration of the primary libidinal drive (Solms & Zellner 2012: 10).

Unlike the Pleasure Principle, however, the 'SEEKING' system is characterised by epistemic emotions<sup>31</sup> such as curiosity and interest (Morton 2009). As Panksepp summarises: "When the SEEKING system is aroused, animals exhibit an intense, enthused curiosity about the world" (Panksepp 2012: 97-98). It produces a special kind of positive affect in mammals that can be described as "excited, euphoric anticipation" (ibid: 95) which differs markedly from the pleasure obtained by

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<sup>31</sup> Epistemic emotions are emotions that generally relate to knowledge e.g. awe, certainty, understanding, interest, doubt, confusion, surprise and curiosity (See Amory, J. & Vuilleumier, P. 2013 :14)



satisfying instincts. This accommodates the presence of a motivational force concerned with knowledge, learning and exploration and not simply with satiating bodily needs.

Panksepp's 'SEEKING' system will be an important theoretical construct for establishing the 'reality oriented' imagination, as it can be seen to work harmoniously with concepts from other fields (such as attachment theory and the mentalization model) to produce a general picture of psychic health that is defined by a form of openness to the environment that facilitates a mutually reinforcing cycle of emotional learning and psychological growth. While the 'SEEKING' system underpins a range of different affective experiences (including some that are negative and even highly psychopathological (Panksepp 2012: 108)) it links human psychological motivation with *exploration* in a manner that fits the proposed 'epistemic turn' in psychoanalytic theory. It is important to note that it does not do this through the claim that exploration is more important than 'feeling good' but rather by arguing that one cannot disconnect the two from one another: seeking out novelty *is* pleasurable. The 'SEEKING' system could therefore be seen to fit smoothly (on a conceptual level) with insights from other fields of research which emphasise that healthy individuals are those who are able to both detect and make use of novelty in their (social) environments (Crittenden & Landini 2011; Fonagy et. al 2015, 2017a, 2017b). Within the mentalization framework, this facet of psychological health shows up most starkly in relation to epistemic trust: 'healthy' individuals are defined by their ability to be open to social and cultural learning from the communication of others (a trait which can be used to great effect in psychotherapy) while those who are 'epistemically vigilant' can become trapped in maladaptive patterns precisely because they cannot use other's communication to revise and update their implicit

behavioural and affective strategies (Fonagy et. al. 2017a, 2017b)<sup>32</sup>. While the fact that an individual's 'SEEKING' system is active is not enough to guarantee that they are able to 'learn from experience' in a psychologically beneficial manner, it can be used to account for the fact that psychologised health is characterized (in part) by a tendency to seek out novel information and perspectives. Within Freud's Pleasure-Reality Principle dichotomy, on the other hand, it is difficult to account for the *desire for exploration* of either aspects of the external world or another's mind.

### **'Frictionless Spinning in a Void': Establishing a new Epistemological Relationship between Mind and World**

So far, I have discussed the idea that naturalizing psychoanalysis results in an increased focus on epistemic dimensions of mental experience including prediction, understanding and curiosity (Clark 2016; Fonafy et. al 2002; Panksepp 2012). The active, 'thought-like' nature of perception has been of great interest to philosophers, due in part to its power to upheave traditional conceptions of knowledge (McDowell 1996). As should now be familiar, the recognition that perception contains cognitive elements counters the naïve idea that perceptual experiences consist of the simple passive reception of sense data, and make it inevitable that the mind plays an active role in shaping experience from 'the bottom up'. While epistemological concerns in the traditional sense (such as delineating what it means to *know* something) lie outside the bounds of both the current project and psychoanalytic thinking as a whole, the manner in which an individual's epistemological access to the world has grown increasing more complex is of prime importance for understanding developments in psychoanalytic theory since Freud's time.

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<sup>32</sup> See Chapters Five and Eight for a fuller account of 'epistemic trust' including its proposed evolutionary roots.

The epistemic anxieties set in motion by Kant's proposal that perception involves the active application of concepts to perceptual experience has been beautifully captured by analytic philosopher John McDowell in "Mind and World" (1996). Discussing the Kantian idea that a form of rational freedom can persist in the face of a 'disenchanted' natural world, McDowell argues:

To accept that point is to acknowledge that judging is an active employment of capacities that empower us to take charge of our thinking. But that threatens us with oscillating between two unpalatable alternatives. The initial threat is that we lose a connection between empirical thinking and independent reality, a connection that there must be if what is in question is to be recognizable as bearing on independent reality at all. The idea of spontaneity is an idea of freedom, and that threatens to make what was meant to be empirical thinking degenerate, in our picture, into a frictionless spinning a void (McDowell 1996: 66).

McDowell paints a philosophically layered picture of the impact of active perception. In a manner not unlike Clark, he asks how it is possible - in the context of our current intellectual climate where knowledge is no longer considered innate, and the natural world no longer 'enchanted' - to make sense of a reason connecting with the natural world. McDowell draws attention to the fact that if it is true that our perceptual beliefs about the external world *entirely* shaped by our conceptual capacities – crudely, if how we think shapes how we see *tout court* – then we must face the risk that this interpretive freedom could go too far. It could leave us in a place where our 'contact' with a reality outside of interpretation is limited, an epistemological position where we cannot truly claim to have knowledge which is grounded in experience. McDowell uses the striking image of 'frictionless spinning in a void' to convey the unsatisfactory

nature of this position, evoking a mind that has an unbounded creative freedom which only serves to trap it in a solipsistic bubble<sup>33</sup>. He continues in “Mind and World” to argue that the ideal position, epistemologically speaking, is one in which thought is enchanted to the degree that it can genuinely be seen to deliver meaning while being bounded by ‘the way things are’ independently of the mind.

Although McDowell’s philosophical concerns are not, in themselves, concerns which are relevant to the psychoanalyst, the picture he paints of the human mind creating meaning from a position of epistemological vulnerability carries many similarities to many contemporary approaches, linking Bayesian models of perception with features of attachment theory and the mentalization model (Bretherton 1992; Bowlby 1997; Fonagy & Luyten 2009). The picture that McDowell builds up of an epistemically vulnerable subject may be highly applicable to the actual situation of infant or young child, especially if the ‘reality’ that the child is aiming to make meaningful contact with is the unobservable psychological world of

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<sup>33</sup> Throughout “Mind and World”, McDowell’s highly philosophical worry concerns the nature of beliefs and their justification. He is not worried by the possibility that exercising conceptual capacities in perception causes people to believe and experience notably different worlds from one another in everyday life: countless experiences of successful communication, cooperation and agreement demonstrate that this is quite clearly not the case. His worries centre, instead, on the *nature of knowing* in this scenario. Following the general tenet that knowledge can be defined as a justified true belief, McDowell discusses the possibility that active perception may threaten the very idea that we can use sensory experience to build up beliefs that are rationally defensible in any (philosophically) meaningful way. These are not worries for the psychoanalyst, who has no need to settle the highly abstract issue of whether sensory beliefs as a general phenomenon are rationally defensible. Despite this, McDowell can be credited for his vivid portrayal of how tenuous epistemic contact with an ‘independent reality’ can be: it is an achievement, rather than a given and one which must balance the application of interpretative capacities with open receptivity to ‘the way things are’. He demonstrates how one cannot assume the openness of the subject to reality, even before we reach issues of unconscious distortion.

her caregiver's mind: an arena which inherently grants the interpreter a great deal less 'friction' than the observation of the natural world.

McDowell's depiction of a mind which is engaged in 'frictionless spinning in a void' is, in his own words, "an account, in diagnostic spirit, of some characteristic anxieties of modern philosophy – anxieties that centre...on the relation between mind and world" (McDowell 1996: xi). It is these anxieties, relating to the contact between mind and world, I believe, that have become constitutive of a psychoanalytic understanding of health and pathology over time in such a way that calls for a radical alternation of the imagination and its psychic function. On this view, it is the mind's *epistemologically complex* relationship with external reality (which includes the unobservable internal worlds of others) that is the driving force behind unconscious distortions and, in the extreme, psychopathology. The ideal scenario, McDowell argues, is one in which we can accommodate the exercise of conceptual capacities within the 'space of reasons' while also retaining a place for the external environment to impinge on our think in a manner that exerts a form of 'spin control' (McDowell 1996). According to the view advanced throughout this thesis, 'reality oriented' imagining is the form that healthy consciousness takes when the individual is in 'good enough' health to lay these inescapable anxieties to rest, not as a form of conscious philosophical pondering, but as a fundamental part of their psychic structure. In health, the individual is open to knowing (and, perhaps more importantly, learning from) reality because they accommodate a place for an independent reality to exert friction on their projections. In what follows, I will turn to the importance of trust in maintaining friction with an 'independent' reality.

## Conclusion

This chapter has proposed that the naturalization of psychoanalytic theory incurs an 'epistemic turn'; a movement of emphasis towards epistemological motivation in psychoanalytic theory. It is within this context, drawing on the empirically oriented models sketched above, that my theory of the 'reality oriented' imagination should be situated. According to this view, an account of mind and psychopathology that places a high emphasis on epistemic factors such as curiosity, prediction and learning can encourage of a view of psychic health which goes above and beyond the *absence of psychopathology*. It encourages an account of psychic health as a form of *imaginative engagement* with the world in which one seeks out opportunities for learning. In the following chapter, I will expand on the theme of emotional and social learning, drawing out its role in dreams, psychopathology and psychic health.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Dreaming, Fantasying and Learning**

I have dedicated the previous two chapters to exploring how psychoanalytic theory has changed since Freud's time, focusing on both paradigmatic shifts within traditional psychoanalytic theory itself and the impact of reuniting psychoanalysis with an empirical knowledge base. At the heart of both of these analyses has been a renewed vision of the relationship between the subject and the external world, in which the individual's connection to an independent reality is understood as an achievement rather than a given (Bateman & Fonagy 2010; Fonagy & Luyter 2009). The account of imagination that emerges from such an approach is bound up with (often unrecognised) epistemological concerns: insights from psychoanalytic theory, affective neuroscience and attachment research form a picture of the 'healthy subject' as embodying an attitude of epistemic openness towards both internal and external reality<sup>34</sup>. This requires individuals to be motivated, at least to some extent, by epistemological concerns (such as prediction, explanation and curiosity) which challenges Freud's 'instinct theory' which is driven by the need to discharge psychic tension.

Yet the replacement of 'pleasure seeking' with 'knowledge seeking', if taken too far, risks portraying the human subject in a rather two-dimensional light. Although I have aimed to show that the epistemological dimensions of psychological functioning have gradually gained more ground since the time Freud was working (e.g. Rees 2012, Panksepp 2012), this should not be read as an argument that humans are not motivated to seek pleasure and avoid pain: that much seems obvious, and a good

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<sup>34</sup> Why such a mind-set is most accurately captured as a form of 'imagination' rather than some other form of mental process is an issue that I will deal with in Chapter Seven.



model of mental functioning will be able to account for it. Rather than replace a drive for pleasure with a drive for knowledge, the current argument encourages the view that pleasure often incorporates epistemic factors in important ways. This is evidenced, for instance, by Panksepp's work on the mammalian SEEKING system (which has been deemed a contemporary equivalent of the Freudian 'drive') in which he argues that there is a particular form of 'feeling good' that manifests as a form of 'enthused curiosity'. Conversely, the negative emotions associated with psychopathology may stem from this 'enthused curiosity' being shut down (see Panksepp 2010) or from the deployment of rigidly coherent interpretive schemas that lock the individual into reinforcing pathological cycles of relating in which little can be learnt. The latter case, which has been conceptualized as failures in epistemic trust from a 'mentalizing' perspective, it is not the inhibition of learning itself that leads to emotional stress, but the manner in which this makes the individual vulnerable to interpersonal scenarios which can lead to dysregulated affect (Fonagy et. al 2015, 2017).

The aim of this chapter is two-fold. In the first instance I will re-visit the epistemological dimensions in health and pathology discussed in the previous chapter by focusing on the important role *emotional learning* in successful affect regulation and, by extension, robust psychic health. Through a discussion of dreams, psychopathology and 'reality oriented' imagining, I hope to demonstrate that the role of 'knowing' in psychic life is much more nuanced than a simple division between a pathological need for certainty versus a healthy tolerance for ambiguity. Rather, the capacity to 'learn from experience' is instantiated to a high degree in both dreaming and 'reflective functioning'. Conversely, 'reality indifferent' (or 'fictive') states of mind in waking life (such as delusional beliefs and experiences) represent a two-fold

epistemological failure: firstly, there is evidence to suggest that they may be the result of failures in emotional learning during sleep and, secondly, they bar further learning by creating an often highly coherent but ‘closed – off’ explanatory hypothesis which has no ‘friction’ with independent states of affairs and therefore does not allow for learning or reappraisal (Hopkins 2016; McDowell 1996).

One benefit of the analysis below is that it focuses on the deep-seated connections between dreaming and mental disorder in a manner that allows for some classic Freudian constructs to be re-integrated. Firstly, it will open up space for the symbolic content of ‘fictive’ experiences to once again provide meaningful insight into an individual’s state of mind. Secondly, it will allow for the development of a ‘reality indifferent’ form of imagining which forms a necessary counterpoint to the ‘reality oriented’ imagination proposed here. While I have aimed to emphasise throughout this thesis that the imagination can be a means of engaging with the external world, this does not entail that ‘reality indifferent’ forms of imagining do not continue to operate in psychic life and leave their mark on the experiencing subject. A theory which can account for these within the same general paradigm as the ‘reality oriented’ imagination – specifically, one that can explain such experiences in a manner which is both consistent with empirical advances and takes epistemological factors into account – will be the most useful for our current purposes.

A similar thematic connection between dreams, ‘reality oriented’ imagining and ‘fictive’ experiences to the one explored here was arguably expressed by Winnicott in the one paper he wrote explicitly about the imagination “Dreaming, Fantasying and Living”. As he writes:

With unexpected clarity, dreaming and living have been seen to be of the same order, daydreaming being of another order. Dreams fit into object-relating in the real world, and living fits into the dream-world in ways which are quite familiar, especially to psychoanalysts. By contrast, however, fantasizing remains an isolated phenomena, absorbing energy but not contributing-in either to dreaming or to living (Winnicott 1971/2005:36).

Winnicott captures the difference between dreams, fantasy and ‘reality oriented’ processes in the language of psychic energy, evoking Freud’s economic perspective on mental functioning (Freud 1895/1950). In what follows, I will aim to show that Winnicott’s general point regarding the fundamental difference between fantasy and dreaming can be applied to recent advances in psychoanalytic theory in a manner which translates them from the language of instinct theory into contemporary view of the mind that is concerned with regulation through psychological and social knowledge. I will demonstrate how both dreaming and ‘reality oriented’ imagining both allow one to learn from emotional experience in a manner which is psychologically adaptive and outline an account of how psychotherapy may re-instantiate this ability in individuals for whom it has become compromised (Fonagy et. al. 2017a, 2017; Hopkins 2016).

Recent neuropsychanalytic research by Jim Hopkins (2016) on the Bayesian ‘complexity’ model of dreaming and mental disorder may be able to provide such a means of re-introducing Freudian insights in a way that is continuous with the developments discussed so far. Drawing on Hopkins’ work, I will combine insights on fictive experiences from the ‘complexity’ model with the core notion of the mentalization model that affect regulation can be achieved through the imaginative interpretation of self and others (Fonagy and Luyten 2009: 1357), suggesting a

framework in which ‘reality indifferent’ and ‘reality oriented’ forms of imagining exist in dynamic tension with one another. The first is the pathological creation of fictive experiences which function in a manner comparable to Kleinian phantasy or the Freudian primary process: they aim to deny a piece of internal or external reality by creating an alternative explanation that renders the experience bearable but at the expense of compromising the individual’s relationship capacity to be open to the world (Segal 1964/1988:5). The second is imaginative mentalizing, included here under the banner of the ‘reality oriented’ imagination, which has the strikingly different aim of creating a psychological arena that incorporates the internal psychological world of self and other (Fonagy et al 2002: 203- 253).

### **Neuropsychanalysis and Mentalizing: Towards a Unification**

As this approach calls for a combined perspective, it will be necessary to set the scene by considering the potential for a link between the neuropsychanalytic account of ‘reality indifferent’ imagining and a mentalizing account of ‘reality oriented’ imagining (Fonagy & Luyten 2009; Hopkins 2016). In what follows, I will aim to demonstrate that despite stemming from different theoretical models, insights from both of these perspectives can be combined in order to create a multifaceted view of the imagination which accounts for its role in both healthy and pathological purposes. Uniting these two perspectives is arguably possible as both use attachment theory as a developmental basis (a fact which shall be the focus of the following chapter) and conceive of the imagination as a means of achieving affect regulation<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> It should be noted upfront that the similarities I will draw attention to are conceptual rather than empirical, although they do presume some degree of general empirical compatibility (that, put simply, both models hold broadly similar beliefs about brain functioning). While there are notable differences in approach these need not derail the current argument. For example, while both models place affect regulation at their core there is a divergence in opinion regarding the role variational free energy, which is not explicitly included within the mentalization model’s

It also notable that ‘fictive’ experiences and poor mentalizing skills have both independently been considered the common factor across various forms of psychopathology: Freud supported the former view via his account of the primary process and its role in psychopathology, the latter stems from recent work undergone by Fonagy and colleagues (Fonagy et. al 2016; Freud 1900, 1915a). A natural extension of this recognition therefore, is an enquiry into how (if at all) these two factors are linked. Although the mentalization model was initially developed to specifically target patients with Borderline Personality Disorder (Bateman & Fonagy 2007), it has since been applied to a range of psychological disorders and even proposed as a general factor underlying all forms of psychopathology (Fonagy et. al. 2016). For example, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression have all been linked to deficiencies in various dimensions of mentalizing and social cognition (Ciaramidaro et. al. 2014; Regenbogen et. al. 2015; Fonagy & Luyten 2016). While space will not permit a satisfactory review of deficits in mentalizing in psychopathology, it is worth illustrating this point with a couple of quick examples. Focusing on these three disorders will also set the scene for the discussion below in which I will demonstrate how they have all been linked to disorders in sleep and dreaming (Hopkins 2016). Various studies have shown that patients diagnosed with schizophrenia perform significantly worse than controls on measures of explicit and implicit mentalizing (e.g. Ciaramidaro et. al. 2014). In an experimental paradigm where schizophrenic patients and controls were both asked to respond to two visual jokes (one of which could be understood purely through a physical and semantic

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conception of dysregulation. This grants the ‘complexity’ a far more explicit focus on sensory prediction than the ‘mentalization model’ but does not entail any direct contradictions (Friston 2012; Hopkins 2016).

analysis, the other of which involved attributing a mental state to a character in a narrative) schizophrenic patients who were actively experiencing symptoms (such as paranoid delusions or passivity) found the psychological joke considerably harder to understand than the non-psychological joke, whereas controls understood both jokes easily (Corcoran 1997). Commonalities have been found between disrupted social cognition in schizophrenia and in bipolar disorder, with the latter seemingly entailing a similar but more modest deficit (Bora & Pantelis 2016). Depression has also been linked to deficits in mentalizing. For example, female inpatients diagnosed with major depressive disorder were found to perform significantly worse than healthy controls when measured for reflective functioning during the Adult Attachment Interview (see Chapter Eight for more on the AAI) (Fischer-Kern et. al. 2013). As we shall see in more detail later on (See Chapter Seven), Fonagy and Luyten have argued that deficits in mentalizing in depressed patients may be responsible for the diminished sense of self and agency that often accompanies the disorder (Fonagy & Luyten 2016). .

It is important to clarify that impairments in mentalizing and fictive beliefs and experiences are not construed as the *causes* of psychopathology. The point, rather, is that they tend both to be *manifest features* of psychopathology. In other words, evidence suggests that both of these features of experience tend to emerge as the dominant epiphenomenal manifestations of failures in internal regulation (which itself will have a complex causal history incorporating both genetic and environmental factors). It should be understood, therefore, that re-establishing the capacity for mentalizing or for veridical experience does not *in itself* constitute recovery from psychopathology, (nor is it impossible to imagine mental health in its absence); one cannot, for example, simply ‘teach’ mentalizing as a means of ameliorating

psychological distress or cure schizophrenia by convincing the sufferer that her beliefs do not align with reality<sup>36</sup> (Fonagy et. al 2017b; Graham 2013). The recognition that both fictive beliefs and failures in mentalizing have found to be common factors in psychopathology, therefore, does not in any way imply that psychopathology should be reduced to these features, or can be explained away by them. Both may be said, however, to characterise the phenomenology of psychopathology in a way which transcends diagnostic categories which makes a perspective which can incorporate them into a larger explanatory framework an appealing line of research to pursue.

### **Perception, Fiction and Imagination: A Clarification of Terms**

Hopkins' neuropsychanalytic interpretation of the link between dreaming and mental disorder is based on the 'Bayesian Brain' model (Friston 2012; Hopkins 2012, 2015). This model, which we saw in Chapter Three is underscored by the recognition that perception is an active force, states conscious perception has evolved in human beings (and other animals) as a means of predicting the sources of incoming data. In line with Kantian epistemology (Kant 1781/1900/2007, see Chapters Two and Four), this approach recognises that although pieces of sensory 'data' may be manifestly visible, we cannot directly perceive the links, causes or organising principles of such data (Hopkins 2012, 2015: see discussion in Chapter Three). Predictive Bayesian neuroscience evolves Kant's basic principles by giving an account of how the brain is able to learn from the experience of deploying its own predictive models, thus

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<sup>36</sup> A potential clinical suggestion that stems from the complexity model states that diminished reliance on complexity reduction via fictive beliefs can be achieved through allowing the re-experiencing of intense emotional conflict in an environment that is safe, thus prompting the reconsolidation of the emotional memory in a new form that does not trigger complexity reduction outside of sleep to the same extent as previously (Hopkins 2016). This would be a fruitful line of further research.

reducing the need for innate mental structures identified in Kantian philosophy, giving it an even more active and generative character (Clark 2016)

Kant is rightly credited for demonstrating that all perception is inherently imaginative, yet I will not be equating Kantian ‘active’ perception with ‘reality oriented’ imagining for the purposes of the current argument. In order to ameliorate the potential confusion that is often associated with the term ‘imagination’ (See Introduction Part One) it is worth offering definitions of the three forms of psychological experience discussed in this chapter before continuing. Although all depend ultimately on the existence of ‘active’ perception – which functions as the basis from which both reality-indifferent and ‘reality oriented’ forms of imagination as I am currently conceiving them - I hope to make the case that these three modes of experience are *psychoanalytically* interesting in virtue of their differences rather than their similarities. I will define them as follows:

- *Veridical Perception*: Perception of the external world according to Kantian/Bayesian principles of ‘active’ vision. While this form of perception has been described as ‘imaginative’ in some contexts, I will argue that it should not count as ‘imaginative’ within a psychoanalytic framework as it fails to incorporate the necessary affective dimensions.
- *‘Reality-indifferent’ Imagination or ‘Fictive’ Experiences*: Psychological experiences that provide pseudo-explanatory narratives without taking external states of affairs into account. Like the Freudian account, this form of imagination is defined by indifference to reality. Unlike the Freudian conception, it is motivated by the need to form a crude predictive explanation, rather than by the pleasure principle.



- *The ‘Reality oriented’ Imagination:* An imaginative mode of experiencing the social and emotional world that understands both the self and others as psychological beings constituted by unobservable thoughts and feelings. It has an affective dimension which crafts a coherent self with a sense of agency.

In what follows, I will unpack how each mode of experience manifests in psychopathology and dreaming (their respective roles in infantile development will be discussed in the following chapter). At this stage, my emphasis will rest on outlining a selected range of the relevant empirical literature and considering some connections that can be made between models.

### **A ‘Complexity’ Account of Dreaming and Perception**

According to the Bayesian perspective, the fundamental aim of the brain/mind is to minimise free energy through formulating conscious experiences which represent the causes of incoming sense data (Hopkins 2012: 9). We saw this concept at play in the ‘face-house’ experiment described the previous chapter, in which an undulating image of a face turning into a house (and then back again) is experienced when the brain has two competing, equally likely hypotheses about what it is seeing. The Bayesian Brain forms predictive hypotheses in order to minimise that it will be ‘surprised’. ‘Surprise’ in this context is formally conceptualised as ‘variational free energy’: a measure of prediction error which plays an analogous role to statistical free energy in thermodynamics (Hopkins 2016:3). While space will not permit an in-depth look at neurophysiology processes underpinning this, the relevant point to be drawn from the notion of ‘variational free energy’ is the recognition that the mind is constantly attempting to minimise its prediction errors through making accurate models of incoming sensory data, while simultaneously making economically

efficient predictions that are not overly complex (Hopkins 2016:3). There is an inherent tension in this task: as accuracy increases, so does complexity. Bayesian predictive models therefore involve a trade-off between accuracy and complexity, with good models resting at a sweet-spot between the two (Hopkins 2016:3).

In “Free Energy and Virtual Reality in Psychoanalysis and Neuroscience” Hopkins (2016) argues that the inherent tension between the tasks of increasing accuracy and decreasing complexity in the Bayesian account of generative consciousness could account for the existence of both dreaming and mental disorder in humans (Hopkins 2016:1). In healthy, adult human life, it suggested, the brain circumvents the conflict of increasing accuracy and decreasing complexity by essentially dividing the tasks between the waking brain and the sleeping brain respectively. Thus, while the waking brain has the role of increasing accuracy by gaining as much new information as possible during the day, it depends upon the sleeping brain to, in essence, streamline the complexity of predictive models (Hopkins 2016: 4)

In dreams, one is cut off from external perceptual stimuli and yet nevertheless has a perceptual experience. As sensory perception shuts down during sleep, dreams must draw their representational contents from other sources. In line with Freudian intuition, the manifest content of dreams is thought to come from internally generated affects and memories (Hopkins 2016: 5-7). Memory plays an especially significant role in complexity reduction because it is through the reconsolidation of memory that affect regulation and emotional learning take place. As part of this process, relevant memories are reconsolidated (updated) to include new information gleaned during waking hours. Affects, especially of a highly arousing conflicting nature, are often the target for complexity reduction through consolidation, so that

both recent experiences and longer-term memories which embody highly complex affects that are still 'active' at the time of sleep can become 'available' for complexity reduction (Hopkins 2016). Consider, as Hopkins does, Freud's dream of Irma's injection in which Freud creates the 'fictive' conscious experience of Otto's culpability in order to ameliorate his much more complex feelings of personal guilt and responsibility over this incident (and other incidents which he associatively relates with it). Discussing the various clinical failures that Freud associates with this dream, Hopkins argues:

These memories are clearly concerned with Freud's feeling of being criticized by Otto and his wish to justify himself; and Freud's discovery in the dream that Otto's thoughtless injection was responsible for Irma's continued suffering provides both justification and grounds for retaliatory criticism. So we see a connection between the manifest content and the emotions of the day that is similar to those in the simple examples above. Just as Freud's experience of satisfaction, so Freud's experience in this more complex dream can be seen as fictively satisfying the desire to justify himself and the annoyance with Otto that he felt on the evening of the dream. So here, as before, we naturally take the dream experience as both caused by, and also as serving to pacify (that is, to inhibit) the emotions aroused in REM (Hopkins 2016: 13).

As Hopkins describes, dreams are both brought on by the emotional disturbances of the day and simultaneously serve to mitigate them. This mitigation takes the form of *emotional learning*, so that new information can be used to enhance the ability for the brain to focus on predictive 'accuracy'.

### **The 'Complexity' Theory of Sleep and Mental Disorders:**

Hopkins proposes that the generation of fictive experiences in psychological disorder may have a similar structure and function to fictive experiences in dreaming. He argues that dreams represent an attempt to obtain regulatory control over conflicting affects that cannot be managed by brain's veridical daytime model. Evidence of this can be seen through the analysis of a range of psychological disorders including schizophrenia, bipolar, OCD and depression. For instance, Elyn Saks describes how her experience of schizophrenia involved the undulation between negative symptoms (in her case, severe depression) and positive symptoms (delusional beliefs):

[...] her increasingly unbearable depression altered only when came to imagine herself "receiving commands" from "shapeless powerful beings that controlled me with thoughts (not voices) that had been placed in my head." These commanded, e.g., "Walk through the tunnels and repent. Now lie down and don't move. You are evil." She was also commanded to injure herself, which she did by burning herself with cigarette lighters, electric heaters, or boiling water, so that finally she spent most of her time "alone in the music room or in the bathroom, burning my body, or moaning and rocking, holding myself as protection from unseen forces that might harm me." These delusions fit the generalizations advanced so far. They served to mitigate the conflict, or reduce the complexity, of Saks' self-punishing depression, by replacing it with an imaginary relationship with punitive others...This change from the internalization to the externalization of punishment constituted Saks' shift from depression to paranoia, and effected a temporary inhibition (reduction of parameters)

of her internal self-punishment, and so a reduction in conflict (complexity) and FE overall (Hopkins 2016: 9-10<sup>37</sup>).

Hopkins later suggests that the positive symptoms of schizophrenia may be understood as the attempt to regulate the unbearable negative symptoms (a similar format of cycling 'realistic' depressive experience and delusional thinking can be found in Bipolar disorder). Thus a delusional belief may act as a regulating force in the same manner that dreams do in healthy functioning, although such attempts at repair unfortunately draw suffers even further away from realistic experiences and therefore increase their need for complexity reducing mechanisms in the long run.

In support of this, numerous studies have demonstrated a connection between sleep deprivation and a reduced capacity for emotional learning. Walker and Van der Helm (2009) have provided a review of research which connects sleep with the capacity to learn from emotional memory, demonstrating that sleep deprivation (and, by extension, deprivation of the opportunity to dream) can have an impact on both the early stages of information encoding and the later stages of memory consolidation (Walker & Van der Helm 2009). It has been well established that events which are emotionally arousing are remembered better than those which are neutral. Following this, sleep deprivation is not believed to lessen our capacity to remember generally but specifically targets the enhancing impact of emotion *on* memory. The finding that Walker and Van der Helm draw from the research in this area which is most useful for the current discussion is that negative events are more resistant to the impact of sleep deprivation than positive or neutral events,

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<sup>37</sup> It is interesting to note that this account remains faithful to Freud's assertion that positive symptoms in schizophrenia represent the mind's attempt at *repairing* the individual's relationship with reality.

suggesting that poorly rested individuals will suffer from a bias of attention towards negativity:

These data indicate that sleep loss impairs the ability to commit new experiences to memory, and has recently been associated with dysfunction throughout the hippocampal complex (Yoo, Hu, Gujar, Jolesz, & Walker, 2007). They also suggest that, while the effects of sleep deprivation are directionally consistent across emotional subcategories, the most profound impact is on the encoding of positive emotional stimuli, and to a lesser degree, emotionally neutral stimuli. In contrast, the encoding of negative memory appears to be more resistant to the effects of prior sleep loss Walker & Van der Helm 2009, accessed online).

This provides an interesting route for the reintroduction of positive and negative affects into the arena of learning and knowledge by demonstrating how failures in learning can be directly tied to the forms of negative affects that are common in psychopathology and impaired mentalizing (Fonagy et. al. 2017a, 2017b). Indeed, Walker and Van der Helm go onto to suggest that the common co-morbidity of sleep disorders and psychopathology can be partially explained by appealing to the reduced capacity to encode and consolidate positive memories when sleep deprived (Walker & Van der Helm 2009). In line with Hopkins' 'complexity' theory, they go on to suggest that it may not be sleep loss itself which impacts psychological well-being but the fact that this deprives individuals of a chance dream. To link a depressed mood with patterns of sleep and dreaming Walker and Van der Helm cite a study in which recently divorced women who were found to be more depressed also had the worst quality sleep. Interestingly, those depressed individuals who reported dreaming more frequently and vividly of their former husbands also had the best

remission rates from depression a year on, suggesting that dreaming plays an active role in ‘taking the sting’ out of painful emotional memories (Cartwright et. al. 1991 quoted in Walker & Van der Helm 2009). Furthermore, patients who have been diagnosed with severe depression (and therefore are not actively delusional in waking life) have been found to have disrupted Slow Wave Sleep: their sleep patterns tend to display a ‘jump’ from ‘light sleeping’ straight to REM. As a result of this ‘jump’ it is thought that these patients may miss out the stage of sleep in which emotional learning is enacted through memory consolidation (the stage in which memories are transferred from the hippocampus to the cortex) (Hopkins 2016:11). Leaving aside the neurophysiological specifics, this is important to note for the current discussion in so far as it suggests that the process of regulating affect during sleep has been disrupted for depressed patients<sup>38</sup> which may, in turn, impact their ability for satisfactory affect regulation in waking life. Insights from the mentalization model suggest that such failures in affect regulation may go onto to impair capacity for emotional learning in waking life (for example, through psychotherapy) thus trapping the individual in a reinforcing cycle that makes them ‘hard to reach’ (Fonagy et. al. 2016, 2017a, 2017b).

PTSD provides another prime example of a link between dreaming and mental disorder: the vivid nightmares characteristic of the disorder are thought to be aborted

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<sup>38</sup> It has been suggested, in turn, that this might explain why patients diagnosed with depression tend to report that their dreams have a mundane quality to them; the bizarreness that often accompanies healthy dreams representing the emotionally charged memories which fail to be reactivated for depressed patients (Hopkins 2016)

attempts to regulate emotional memories that ultimately are too traumatic for the brain to consolidate (Hopkins 2016: 10-11). As Walker and Van der Helm describe:

If [the] process of divorcing emotion from memory is not achieved across the first night following such an experience, the model would predict that a repeat attempt of affective demodulation would occur on the second night, since the strength of the emotional “tag” associated with the memory would remain high. If this process failed a second time, the same events would continue to repeat across ensuing nights. It is just such a cycle of REM-sleep dreaming (nightmares) that represents a diagnostic key feature of post-traumatic stress disorder (Van der Helm & Walker 2009, accessed online).

These findings could be taken to support the notion, adopted by many philosophers and psychologists over the years, that an individual experiencing psychotic delusions is trapped in a similar experience to the healthy individual when she is dreaming (Stevens & Price 2016: 229). Yet the particular version of this idea instantiated in the complexity model, drawing on classic Freudian insights can allow for a greater depth of explanation. The neuropsychanalytic approach draws connections between the *psychological mechanisms* operating in sleep and those operating in mental illness, rather than simply pointing to similarities between the *manifest content* dreams and florid psychosis, suggesting a deeper underlying structure between dreaming and psychopathology on the level of function (Hopkins 2016: 10-14). Evidence for this can be found by examining the disrupted sleep patterns in individual’s who suffer from psychopathological conditions but who are not trapped in the sways of psychosis.



There are a couple of further points worth drawing attention to before turning to a fuller account of emotional learning in waking life and its disruption in psychopathology. Firstly, the importance of dreaming for emotional learning from the neuropsychanalytic continues a general theme in the evolution of psychoanalytic theory, in which an aspect of mental life which Freud lamented as inevitable is re-characterised as both positive and necessary for healthy sophisticated functioning. While Freud believed that dreams were a healthier way of allowing unconscious wishes to emerge than active psychosis, he nevertheless did not portray them as constitutive of 'reality oriented' processes. Secondly, the 'complexity' model may offer a greater explanatory force in terms of the *content* of dreams and symptoms by presenting them as meaningfully symbolic representations of an individual's experience (Hopkins 2016: 15). Both Freud's dream and Elyn Sak's delusion have the potential to illuminate specific information about the thinker. For example, while the mentalization model has the potential to account for the profound psychological disorganization typical in schizophrenia in terms of a deeply disrupted 'self-representation', it cannot explain why a particular person has a particular delusion at a particular time. The 'complexity' model can restore these elements of Freudian thinking into psychoanalytic theory.

Hopkins has linked the tendency to resort to 'fictive' complexity reducing mechanisms in mental disorder to the 'cumulative trauma' of misattunements in early attachment relationships (Hopkins 2015, 2016:8-9). Fonagy and colleagues have located failures in the capacity for 'reflective functioning' within the same developmental paradigm, once again suggesting lines of cross communication between these two models (Fonagy et. al. 2002; Fonagy & Luyten 2009). While developmental issues will surface briefly in the discussion that follows, I will reserve

the majority of my analysis for the following chapter, which will aim to provide an account of ‘reality oriented’ imagining from a developmental perspective.

### **Emotional Learning and ‘Epistemic Trust’**

Although ‘mentalizing’ is a process through which we can come to attribute psychological states to both ourselves and others, it is imperative that a ‘mentalizing’ stance is characterized by a sense of openness and curiosity<sup>39</sup> rather than a state of rigid certainty. Openness to learning about the social and psychological world, much like ‘mentalizing’, is thought to develop within a securely attached relationship in which the baby and young child can cultivate the capacity for ‘epistemic trust’: the global belief that what others communicate about social and cultural matters is both applicable to the self and generalizable to other contexts (Fonagy et. al 2017a, 2017b). Epistemic trust can be seen to highlight communication and knowledge transmission over relational security per se. It takes “natural pedagogy” (see Csibra & Gergely 2009) as its basis, noting that the transmission of cultural and social knowledge has put homo sapiens at a distinct evolutionary advantage over other species in part because of our willingness to trust authority as a source of knowledge. This mirrors a general move away from the Cartesian picture of the isolated thinker who rationally deduces everything for herself, towards a view of man as a relational being not only along an affective dimension but in terms of epistemological matters.

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<sup>39</sup> In Chapter Seven of this work I will link ‘mentalizing’ to Keats’ notion of ‘negative capability’.

Attachment is thought to open an individual out to learning from others through a set of ostensive clues in interaction which serve to reduce an inherited epistemic vigilance. As Fonagy et. al. describe:

This specific form of learning is stimulated by ostensive cues generated by the communicator [8, 9]. Such cues trigger a pedagogic stance in the recipient, priming them to regard forthcoming communications as significant. Human infants display species-specific sensitivity and deference to non-verbal ostensive cues, such as eye contact, turn-taking contingent reactivity, being called by their name, and the use of a special tone of voice ('motherese') by the communicator [10, 11]. These ostensive cues have in common the quality that the recipient is recognized as a subjective, agentic self. Once epistemic trust is stimulated in this way, the channel for the transmission of knowledge is opened. Mimicry may be protected by human evolution because it generates epistemic trust, inevitably signalling recognition in the child by the imitating adult. A social smile (recognition of the self by the other) probably increases the tendency for imitation because the smile generates epistemic trust and opens the communication channel to receive knowledge (Fonagy et. al 2017, accessed online).

While this form of higher level social and emotional learning is in a sense far removed from the fine grained perceptual learning which takes place moment to moment in sensory perception, Hopkins has suggested that the two can be linked:

[...] second-by-second microanalyses of face-to face interactions between mothers and infants show that disorganization at 12+ months can be predicted from the 4<sup>th</sup> month by episodes of emotional misrecognition very different from

abuse. These involve short (2.5s) interactions in play , whose fine details are undetectable by unaided sight, and in which, among other things, the mothers concerned refuse to recognize or co-ordinate empathically with their infants' expressions of distress. Instead they respond with exaggerated surprise or smiling, or again, as distress increases, by facial freezing and/or looking away. ...This deprives the infants (as their mothers may have been deprived) of opportunities for learning in emotional interaction, and so for internalizing in their own regulative models the understanding responses of others. Instead they apparently learn that their conflicts and distress are unsharable, intolerable, and not to be recognized or known (Hopkins 2016: 9).

There is thus reason to believe that fine grained perceptual cues can filter up into global attitudes regarding epistemic trust and vigilance.

Disorganized attachment in infancy caused by the cumulative trauma of misrecognition has been linked to psychopathology later in adult life. Notably, connections have been drawn between disorganized attachment and Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), which Fonagy et. al have also linked to a shutting down of 'epistemic trust' ('epistemic petrification') so that sufferers of BPD can no longer use the communication of trusted others as a means of ameliorating psychological distress<sup>40</sup> (Fonagy 2001; Fonagy et. al 2017a, 2017b, Fonagy & Luyten 2009). This, they note, is likely to be an adaptive move which was originally deployed in interpersonal circumstances where others' communication was either not generally transparent and benign, or did not treat the subject as self or agent in her own right<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> This finding can be seen to cohere with the general insight that patient's with insecure attachment style have a more rigid belief system and are less open to revising their beliefs in light of new evidence.

<sup>41</sup> A developmental account of the 'agentic self' will be provided in the following chapter.

(Fonagy et. al. 2017b). Adverse initial circumstances are believed to negatively impact how patients with personality disorders are able to ‘make use’ of therapy: the fact that they are not able to let go of their epistemic vigilance entails that it is difficult for them to internalise the therapist’s communication as applicable and generalizable to other contexts, thus making genuine therapeutic change difficult (Fonagy et. al. 2016). Following this, Fonagy and colleagues have argued that the initial goal of therapy in such cases must be to cultivate the patient’s capacity for social learning, first from the therapist and then from their own social environments. The patient’s emerging capacity for epistemic trust outside the therapeutic hours is thought to be the driver of psychic change, as it allows them to adopt a ‘mentalizing’ stance within their own social lives in a way that loosens deeply entrenched patterns of interpersonal relating (Fonagy et. al. 2016). Therapy, therefore, can have a similar impact to successful dreaming, by allowing (what I am calling) a capacity for imaginative engagement with reality to take the place of a rigidity; it allows for a plastically ‘flexible’ attitude towards one’s experiences which takes them to be meaningful without necessarily being universal. The literature on ‘epistemic trust’ also proposes a highly different role for ‘knowledge’ in psychotherapy which can be seen to cohere with general theme drawn out so far across this thesis. Rather than the declarative insight promised in traditional Freudian psychoanalysis, this approach places the subject’s epistemological vulnerability at the core of understanding disorder (Fonagy et. al. 2017a, 2017b). In the face of an ultimately unknowable world, the only means of exerting some ‘friction’ (see McDowell 1996) is to take other’s communication as genuinely trustworthy without falling into blind acceptance.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has aimed to show how healthy psychological functioning is defined by a healthy partnership between dreaming and ‘reality oriented’ imagining (here portrayed through the mentalization model) which works to instantiate psychological attitudes in which emotional learning is both possible and implicitly sought out. In contrast, ‘reality indifferent’ experiences can be seen to provide a pathological response to deep-seated epistemic anxieties which provide coherent explanatory frameworks at the expense of veridical accuracy, making them an archetypal instance of ‘frictionless spinning in a void’ (McDowell 1996:11). In the final section of this work, I will link ‘epistemic trust’ with psychoanalytic writings on ‘negative capability’ (see Ou 2009). First, however, it will be necessary to consider in more depth how the capacity for emotional learning (thought to arise through a healthy partnership of dreaming and reflective functioning) can be linked with infantile development. I will turn to this now.



## **Chapter Six**

### **Towards a Developmental Account of the ‘Reality Oriented’ Imagination**

The previous two chapters have aimed to capture a new role for imaginative processes, drawing out the importance of epistemological factors in “dreams, fantasising and living” (see Winnicott 1971/2005:36-50). I demonstrated that both ‘reality oriented’ imagining and dreaming can be granted a key role in emotional learning which can be considered a pinnacle of psychic health, whereas ‘fictive’ experiences (which, much like Freud’s primary process are indifferent to reality) are simultaneously a response to failures in emotional learning and block it through the creation of closed-off explanatory systems which offer coherent ‘explanations’ which lack any ‘friction’ with a world outside of the mind (see McDowell 1996). My aim has been to offer a reformulation of the function of imaginative processes in psychoanalytic theory that allows for a heightened emphasis on epistemological and interpersonal concerns, presenting an overarching picture in which an individual’s psychic relationship to *knowledge and uncertainty* takes precedence over their capacity for object-relating or the toleration of instinctual frustration.

This chapter will augment the last by exploring ‘reality oriented’ and ‘reality indifferent’ imagining from a developmental perspective. In doing so, I will draw once more on mentalization literature and the ‘complexity’ model, with the aim of reconstructing a schematic developmental narrative which can go some way towards accounting for an individual’s tendency to rely on ‘reality oriented’ or ‘reality indifferent’ forms of imagination respectively (Fonagy et. al 2002; Hopkins 2015, 2016). The developmental account presented below will be important in laying the groundwork for the final section of this thesis, in which I will aim to formulate and characterise ‘reality oriented’ imagining.



## **Defining the ‘Mentalizing Imagination’**

A high level of emphasis has been placed in this thesis on the fact that mentalizing is a form of imaginative activity, yet the precise form of imagination employed in successful mentalizing remains unclear. Drawing out the precise nature of imaginative mentalizing is a daunting conceptual task, compounded by the fact the both mentalizing and imagining are themselves ‘open’ terms which can refer to a range of distinct mental processes. In what follows I will set out a phenomenological framework for interpreting the ‘mentalizing imagination’ with the aim of highlighting how mentalization can be seen to fit into the concept of ‘reality oriented’ imagining drawn out in this thesis.

It is recognised within the philosophical literature that the capacity to ‘mind read’ draws on a form of imagination, with the human capacity for empathy, moral reasoning and the ability to infer unobservable states all being linked by various authors to the human capacity for imagination (see Kind 2016). Broadly speaking, two theoretical camps have emerged to explain how human beings are able to imaginatively access the psychological states of others, which have been termed ‘theory of mind’ and ‘simulation theory’ (Heal 2003; Gallagher & Zahavi 2008). ‘Theory of mind’ (also known as ‘theory theory’) is the notion that we make sense of other’s behaviour by interpreting it as the causal effect of their beliefs, desires and intentions. To take a commonplace example: if we perceive another person pick up a glass and take a drink we will make sense of this action by inferring that the person had an intention to pick up the glass and a belief that making certain bodily movements will allow them to do this (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008). This entails that our understanding of others is based around a third-person perspective. As Jane Heal describes:

The approach is resolutely third-personal. The Cartesian introspectionist error – the idea that from some confrontation with psychological items in our own case we learn their nature – is repudiated. We are said to view other people just as we view stars, clouds or geological formations. People are just complex objects in our environments whose behaviour we wish to anticipate but whose causal innards we do not perceive. We therefore proceed by observing the intricacies of their external behaviour and formulating some hypotheses and how the innards are structured (Heal 2003: 11).

There is a lack of consensus among ‘Theory of Mind’ supporters as to whether the ability to causally map psychological states onto behaviour is learned and explicit (much like the learning of scientific theories), or whether there is an innate ‘theory of mind’ mechanism or module in the brain which generates this perspective automatically. Despite this, all theoretical models which fall under the ‘theory of mind’ banner can be differentiated from the second broad approach to social cognition which known as ‘simulation theory’. ‘Simulation theory’ proposes that we are able to understand others behaviour and infer their mental states using a form of first-person imaginative exercise. To return to the rather mundane example above, a simulation theorist would argue that we understand another person’s behaviour when we see them reach for a glass because we imaginatively simulate what we would be thinking, feeling or believing if we were to perform this action and then attribute these qualities to the observed individual. In this respect, our ability to understand others draws on the same mechanism we use when thinking about future possibilities in our own lives (Heal 2011:13). Much like supporters of the ‘theory of mind’ approach, simulation theorists disagree on the extent to which the simulation process is

learned, conscious and explicit, with some arguing that it is a sub-personal, automatic process that does not give rise a conscious experience of simulation.

How does the 'mentalization' model fit into this theoretical landscape? Fonagy and colleagues do not discuss the merits of a 'simulation theory' versus a 'theory of mind' approach extensively in the mentalization literature. Where they do, it is often implied that the two approaches co-exist as distinct routes towards understanding others. For instance, in discussing the positive effect of peer-group interactions on sound mentalizing in young children, they state:

Both simulation and theory-theory explanations of the development of mindreading offer good explanations of the facilitative effect of more intense peer-group interaction (Ruffman et al. 1998). Peer-group interaction should increase the opportunities that children have for simulation, imagining what they would see, think, feel and so on if they were in another person's situation.

Equally, interaction with peers or older siblings could be seen from a theory-theory perspective as a rich source of ideas of how the mind works (Fonagy et. al 2003: 50)

The possibility that individuals can draw on both simulative replication and third-person analysis in understanding others has been linked to the multi-dimensional nature of mentalizing (Davidsen & Fosgerau). Where a 'theory of mind' approach can be seen as compatible with explicit and cognitive dimensions of mentalizing, it arguably could not be adopted as an overarching conceptual framework because it fails to capture 'implicit' mentalizing. This is important to note as psychopathology does not always involve the wholesale shutting down one's capacity to mentalize but can also consist of one dimension of mentalizing becoming out of balance with the

others. For example, some Borderline Patients are proficient ‘hypermentalizers’. These patients are keen and accurate readers of other’s states of mind, an ability that was often cultivated in an abusive or neglectful environment where the ability to predict caregiver’s mood and behaviour could be protective. However, unlike ‘healthy’ or ‘balanced’ mentalizing, these patients’ attention is so fixated on the ‘other’ dimension of mentalizing that they remain out of touch with their own subjective states, and therefore fail to use mentalization to regulate affect and maintain an experiential grasp on an ‘agentive self’ (Fonagy et al 2003).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to satisfactorily draw up a conceptual framework for the ‘mentalization’ model, not least because it is a rapidly growing body of empirical knowledge which may not (currently) permit this level of thematization (Davidsen & Fosgerau 2015). However, in order to make the case that the ‘mentalizing’ imagination is a form of ‘reality oriented’ imagination (as it has been defined throughout this thesis) it will be useful to draw out similarities between a phenomenological theories of mindreading and the implicit or affective dimensions of mentalizing. The approach that I will focus rejects both ‘theory of mind’ and ‘simulation theory’ in favour of offering an account of how it is possible for individuals to directly perceive emotions in others (Lennon 2011). The ‘direct perception’ account, I will suggest, has the benefit of unifying my theory of the ‘reality oriented’ imagination with the ‘mentalization’ literature using the same phenomenological framework that is applicable to ‘predictive processing’ models. The focus on affective and implicit dimensions of ‘mentalizing’ is justified in light of the fact that research increasingly suggests that implicit mindreading forms the bulk of our ‘mentalizing’ abilities, with explicit ‘theory of mind’ interpretations representing only the ‘tip of the iceberg’ (Davidsen & Fosgerau 2015)

The 'direct perception' approach to mindreading has been discussed by phenomenologists such as Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty, who characterise interpersonal perception as non-inferential and epistemologically immediate. According to Merleau-Ponty, for example, we do not recognise an angry face by piecing together the isolated features of the angry expression and inferring that they signal anger: we simply read anger within a gesture. As he quotes:

Faced with an angry or threatening gesture, I have no need, in order to understand it, to recall the feelings which I myself experienced when I used those gestures on my own account...I do not see anger or a threatening attitude as a psychic fact hidden behind the gesture, I read anger in it (Merleau-Ponty 1968 quoted in Lennon 2011: 284)

A staunch rejection of the notion that there are facts "hidden behind" appearances is a core feature of the phenomenological approach in general (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008). As we shall see in greater depth in Chapter Seven of this work, phenomenologists are committed to taking the world as lived and experienced as the only meaningful starting point of philosophical enquiry. Imaginative perception, on this account, is the means through which reality is opened out to the experiencing individual (Lennon 2011, 2015). The phenomenological approach to 'mindreading' extends this principle to social cognition: rather than imagination being used to attribute unobservable mental states to others (as in 'theory of mind') or generating an internal experience (as in 'simulation theory'), it is the means through which affective meaning is embedded within our perceptual experience of others. In "Imagination and the Expression of Emotion" Kathleen Lennon grants the 'direct perception' approach a Kantian heritage, specifying Kant's concept of the 'productive imagination' as the psychological force which grants an affective form to our

perception of facial and bodily expression. It is through the 'productive imagination', she argues, that we are able to understand behaviour and emotional expression as carrying an affective content which is structured by reasons (Lennon 2011). 'Direct perception' can therefore, much like 'predictive processing' be seen as a direct descendent from Kantian metaphysics, allowing it to be form of imagining which is distinctly 'reality oriented'.

Furthermore, the 'direct perception' approach can also be usefully integrated into the 'mentalization' model's developmental narrative. Unlike both 'theory of mind' and 'simulation theory', the 'direct perception' approach grants an important role for bodily and facial expressions. This emphasis on physicality can be helpfully integrated into the developmental perspective on 'mentalizing', in which an infant comes to coherently experience and learn about its own affective states through the reactive facial expressions of their caregivers (This process will be outlined in some depth in this chapter).

Secondly, this approach can be situated within a Kantian framework whereby understanding the behaviour of other in terms of intentional action is a form of 'experiencing as' which we encouraged to adopt during our upbringing, in a process which has been described by John McDowell as being initiated into the 'space of reasons'. As Lennon describes:

[...] detecting emotions via emotional expressions is something we learn, are initiated into within culture. What we are being given with such training is a certain kind of perceptual sensitivity to patterns manifest the bodies of others over time. On the direct perception account, then, the detection of expressive gestures is the recognition of certain contours or patterns displayed in bodily

behaviour, open to view, With this account of what constitutes the perception of expressive content, comes an account of what it is for bodily gestures to have such a content: for it is simply for them to manifest such patterns, recognizable by observers, teachable to newcomers and projectable to new cases (Lennon 2011:286)

It can be argued that a comparable perspective is introduced directly by Fonagy and colleagues. Continuing their discussion on the role of peer-interaction in developing the capacity to mentalization, Fonagy et al. provide an account of social cognition which is rooted in a similar form of developmental enculturation:

Another view is that enculturation is itself the source of the child's mental-state concepts (Astington 1983). Bruner (1983) proposed that parent's tendency to treat the infant's spontaneous gestures as if they were intentional communications leads to infants seeing themselves as having intentions and starting to communicate intentionally... Through participation in activities in their culture they come to share their culture's way of regarding other's and their own actions. If children's entry into the folk psychology is viewed as a process of "apprenticeship" In which senior peers and caregivers are seen as encouraging the child's adoption of mentalizing concepts (Astington 1996 ; Lewis et. al 1996), then secure attachment may be considered as a kind of catalyst to this learning process (Fonagy et. al. 2003: 50-51).

Adopting a 'mentalizing' perspective on social cognition appears, on the one hand, to support the notion that understanding others – whether through functional analysis ('theory of mind') or experiential replication ('simulation theory') – is a learned and explicit process; as it is only through good-enough interactions with caregivers and

peers that infants and young children are able to develop skills in social cognition. On the other hand, the fact that the mentalization model framed as a psychoanalytic developmental narrative allows for a more nuanced perspective. As I shall explore in more depth in the forthcoming chapters, the capacity to 'mentalize' is arguably different in kind to the form of theoretical learning involved, for example, in grasping scientific theories. Rather than being simply a form of conceptual knowledge, the capacity for imaginative mentalizing can be seen as a constitutive part of developing the capacity to have certain forms of affective experiences. As a result, the breakdown of the 'mentalizing' imagination in mental illness entails more than just a failure of conceptual intelligence; it fractures affective coherence of the subject's sense of being-in-the-world on a much deeper level. It is arguably only the 'direct perception' view which can adequately capture the breakdown of 'mentalizing' in psychopathology by having the theoretical resources to capture it in terms of a rupture the relationship between the subject and the world on a deep-seated level.

In summary, 'mentalizing' –especially across its implicit and affective dimensions – can be seen as a species of 'reality oriented' imagining, defined from a phenomenological vantage point as a form of perceptual sensitivity and engagement with external reality. Although the 'direct perception' approach could seem to eschew the role of imaginative elaboration in our understanding of others, this is only when imagination is understood as the generation of internal experiences. Much like the 'reality oriented' imagination generally, 'mentalizing' can be seen the manner in which interpersonal perception is made possible for the experiencing subject; it is a form of imaginative augmentation of perceptual givens that allows for a deeper connection with reality.



### **Mentalization and Agency:**

This chapter will also establish an important conceptual connection between self and agency in the mentalization model ('the agentive self' (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 203 - 251) which I will argue plays a vital role in establishing the epistemological dimension of 'reality oriented' imagining. It is worth pre-empting my argument briefly: 'reality oriented' imagining can be characterised by an epistemic attitude of 'negative capability', a phrase coined by English poet John Keats to evoke a mind-set of comfortable yet explorative not-knowing (Ou 2009). What differentiates straightforward lack of knowledge from 'negative capability' in a psychoanalytic sphere, I will argue, is the felt presence of an 'agentive self' which can transform uncertainty into possibility for exploration, learning and action (Fonagy et. al. 2002; Ou 2009, Panksepp 2012). This chapter will therefore be dedicated to setting out the empirical literature on infantile development which can be used as a foundation for this claim.

It will also be necessary to delineate the 'reality oriented' imagination from the Freudian 'secondary process' reality principle (Freud 1911, 1915a). One of the most striking differences is that the 'reality-oriented's' imagination often has a pointed social and cultural focus which the 'reality principle' does not. Accounts of the development of mentalizing, which I have presented as a prime example of 'reality oriented' imagining, can demonstrate how the capacity for reflective functioning grows out of mechanisms that are specifically geared towards processing social information and, importantly, show how these mechanisms differ from those which allow us to process information regarding inanimate objects (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 222-223) The *sui generis* nature of social understanding, alongside the unique developmental circumstances in which it is encouraged to flourish, can arguably go

some way towards explaining features of its phenomenology. Firstly, the imperfect and unpredictable nature of social phenomena (in contrast to physical objects) can help to explain why they require a greater tolerance for ambiguity and openness to 'learning from experience'. Secondly, the 'agentive' dimension of the 'reality oriented' imagination can be attributed to the fact that it is the capacity for an 'agentive self' develops within interpersonal conditions which sustain an infant's illusion of control (Fonagy et. al. 2002 176-181; Winnicott 1971/2005: 151).

The developmental perspectives outlined below stem from the neuropsychanalytic 'complexity' model and the mentalization model, both of which use attachment theory as a general developmental base (Bowlby 1997, Crittenden & Landini 2011). A unification between psychoanalysis and attachment theory faces potential difficulties as a result of their somewhat contentious history (see Fonagy 2001 for a substantial review). Due to its biological heritage, attachment theory has been criticised by psychoanalysts for reducing the complexity of the infant's subjective experience to a set of empirically measurable behavioural criteria and overemphasising the external environment at the expense of internal phantasy. It has also been accused of proposing an overly linear account of development in which only attachment relationships have the power to disrupt psychological balance rather than a multiplicity of drives or developmental pathways (Fonagy 2001:8). These criticisms have arguably become less pertinent over time, as the evolution of attachment theory has been characterised by a move towards the acknowledgment of the subjectivity of representational states. For instance, the notion of 'felt security', developed in the 1970s by Sroufe and Waters, allowed for the expansion of Bowlby's initial focus on physical proximity to include psychological proximity and availability (Fonagy 2001: 19-20). Fonagy has argued that the development of 'felt security' has

allowed attachment theory to be characterised as a mechanism of affect regulation, which in turn expanded its applicability to internal experience: “Thus, internal cues such as mood, illness or even fantasy could be seen as relevant to the child’s response to separation, as well as external events and the social environmental context” (Fonagy 2001: 20) Moreover, it could be argued that there exists a greater variance of approaches and viewpoints within psychoanalytic theory than between attachment theory and psychoanalysis as a whole (see Greenberg & Mitchell 1983; Rayner 1991). The inherent flexibility within the psychoanalytic approach (which will be evidenced by the argument to follow) also entails that certain psychoanalytic theories will be more amenable to an integration with the principles of attachment theory than others.

### **Prediction and Epistemic Opacity in Attachment**

Considering development from an attachment perspective demonstrates why using the imagination to both explore and structure one’s environment is necessary during infancy and childhood (Bowlby 1997, 1989/2005; Bretherton 1992; Crittenden & Landini 2011) and can establish a sense of the infant as epistemically vulnerable in a manner which explains the emergence of both interpersonal ‘reality oriented’ imagining and its pathological counterpart.

Attachment theory, broadly stated, focuses on the ways in which individuals form cognitive and affective strategies for maintaining psychological proximity to caregivers (Bowlby 1997, 1979/2005; Crittenden & Landini 2011). It not only places the external object at the centre of psychic life but, through its emphasis on unconscious forms of processing social information, creates an internal world which is primarily *strategic rather than compensatory* (Bretherton 1992; Rees 2012). As discussed in Chapter Four, attachment theory is based upon the infant and child’s

development of often rough-and-ready ‘working models’ whose prime purpose is to understand and predict caregiver’s behaviour (Bowlby 1979/2005: 140; Rees 2012). Perhaps the most famous empirical test of attachment theory is Mary Ainsworth’s ‘Strange Situation’ experiment (Ainsworth & Bell 1970; Crittenden & Landini 2011: 730), in which an infant’s behaviour is observed during several short (3 minute) separations and reunions with their caregiver (Ainsworth & Bell 1970:53). Observing hundreds of infants in this scenario allowed Ainsworth to develop “attachment style classifications” of secure, insecure (anxious/avoidant) and insecure (anxious/resistant)<sup>42</sup> (Ainsworth & Bell 1970; Fonagy et. al. 2002:38).

**Secure Attachment:** Secure infants explore the experiment room freely while their caregiver is present, become visibly anxious in the presence of the stranger and avoid contact with her, are distressed when their caregiver leaves and seek contact with the caregiver immediately on their return. These infants are reassured enough by contact with the caregiver to swiftly resume their exploration of their surroundings (the instinct of the secure infant to explore can be seen to corroborate the view, presented here, that psychic health is defined in part by the *presence of curiosity*).

**Insecure (Anxious/Avoidant):** Infants classed as insecure (anxious/avoidant) do not appear to be made as anxious by the separation (although physiological data collected suggests they are in a very high state of emotional arousal, higher in fact than their secure counterparts who freely express their distress) and do not overtly prefer the mother to the stranger on her return.

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<sup>42</sup> The later classification of ‘disorganized attachment’ will be discussed in due course.

**Insecure (Anxious/Resistant):** Insecure (anxious/resistant) infants are limited in their play and exploration in the presence of the caregiver, become highly distressed at separation and do not seem reassured by the caregiver's return, continuing to express a variety of unsettled behaviours for some time afterwards.

It is hypothesised that secure infants are able to retain a higher degree of affective and psychological organisation than their insecure counterparts because their caregivers, while present, are emotionally available in a manner which helps the infant to regulate their emotions in a more effective way (Bowlby 1979/2005, 1997; Crittenden & Landini 2011). This successful regulation within the infant-mother dyad can then be internalized as a capacity for self-regulation in times of separation and emotional turmoil, allowing the child to remain (more or less) psychologically organised in situations that are felt to be threatening (Fonagy et. al 2002:38).

For the purposes of the current argument it is important to acknowledge what procedures like the 'Strange Situation' can highlight about epistemic opacity of the world from the child's point of view. The behaviour of other people, including caregivers on whom the infant's survival depends, is not inherently regular and predictable (like, for instance, the movement of inanimate objects) (See Fonagy et. al. 2002: 212). In order to form interpretive working models of the relevant incoming data, the infant and young child must therefore create a narrative which explains the caregiver's behaviour in a manner which makes it somewhat understandable and predictable (Hopkins 2015, 2016, also see relevant discussion in Chapter Four). This grants the environment the potential to have a *significant* impact on psychological growth: the predictability of a caregiver's responses to the infant will be shaped by her own unique personality and personal history, which in turn will require different behavioural (and later psychological) responses on behalf of the infant or young

child. It will be helpful here to re-call the example I gave earlier on (See Chapter Four): an infant who is paired with a caregiver who becomes implicitly rejecting in the face of distress will find it adaptive to minimise their expressions of negative affect, whereas this will prove counterproductive for the infant whose caregiver only responds to expressions of distress once they reach a certain volume. As this example demonstrates, insecure attachment styles are therefore not intrinsically maladaptive but rather a strategic use of the information available to the baby or child within the context of their particular attachment relationship (Bowlby 1979/2005: 87 – 93; Crittenden & Landini 2011)<sup>43</sup>.

### **Attachment Security and ‘Reality Oriented’ Imagining**

There is, however, a difference in kind between insecure and secure attachment styles that is highly relevant to the capacity for ‘reality oriented’ imagining, which stems from the different manner in which secure and insecure individuals attend to and process social information (Crittenden & Landini 2011; Gopnik 2009). As babies grow into children (and then adults), overt attachment behaviour (such as clinging or avoidance) transforms into internal dispositions to represent (or symbolise) interpersonal interactions. Crittenden and Landini have argued that individuals process information in a manner that, following the evolutionary mandate, maximise the potential for sexual success and minimise exposure to danger<sup>44</sup> (Bowlby 1979/2005:143- 149; Crittenden & Landini 2011:9-10). For the purposes of the current discussion, the protection against danger plays an especially important role

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<sup>43</sup> This has led some attachment researchers (see Crittenden & Landini 2011) to eschew the terms “secure” and “insecure” in terms of the morally neutral categories “A”, “B” and “C”, terms which they argue better preserve the fact that *all* attachment strategies are normally effective within the interpersonal context that they are first cultivated and deployed (Crittenden & Landini 2011:492)

<sup>44</sup> Crittenden and Landini’s theory will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 7, where I will discuss the relationship between ‘reality oriented’ imagining and language.

in highlighting how the conditions within which thoughts are formed shapes their content (ibid). Notably, it has been argued that representations are constructed more rapidly in situations where there is a perceived threat in order to meet the danger as quickly as possible. Secure individuals, who do not perceive close interpersonal interactions as threatening, tend to integrate information in a measured way using various formats of representation from a range of memory systems, resulting in a greater degree of psychological integration. Integration is a “slow cortical process” (Crittenden & Landini 2011: 12) which is considered a luxury when threat is looming: insecure individuals unconsciously make the judgment that there is not enough time to integrate a range of different forms of information and therefore tend to fall back on the most commonly used representational schemas (ibid). Despite the fact that most grown adults tend to adopt a range of processes, insecure individuals tend to be more consistent and less varied in their use of strategies than secure individuals as a direct result of having a lower threshold for feeling ‘under threat’. The speed at which symbolic representations are formed by insecure individuals can also prevent a satisfactory comparison of the current’s situation’s similarity to events in the individual’s past. In favouring self-protection over openness to learning from experience, a judgment of similarity is likely to be assumed without the individual pausing to assess whether manifest similarities may only be superficial (Crittenden & Landini 2011: 11-12). As a result, the approach of insecure individuals not only includes less representational variance within a schema or strategy, it also increases the likelihood that the same schema will be applied across a range of situations, even though for some these it will inevitably prove maladaptive. As Crittenden and Landini state: “as threat increases, so does uniformity of strategy” (Crittenden & Landini 2011: 12).

Secure strategies are therefore more adaptive across a *range of scenarios* than insecure strategies, despite both being realistic responses to a set of concrete developmental circumstances (Crittenden & Landini 2011: 19-20). The expectation of insecure individuals that others will not be trustworthy therefore often fails to be genuinely protective, and can lead to even higher levels of interpersonal vulnerability. It is important to emphasise here that secure individuals are not defined by the reverse expectation that others are trustworthy, but by their greater capacity to attend to the fine grained social detail that will allow them to assess social situations accurately (Crittenden & Landini 2011: 19- 20; Fonagy et. al 2016, 2017a, 2017b). This has the important consequence, I propose, that secure individuals are able to imaginatively engage with their environment in a manner that makes them *open to learning*.

### **Disorganized Attachment: a Failure in Predictive Strategies**

Secure attachment therefore provides a sound base for healthy psychological functioning, with secure individuals boasting a greater degree of adaptive flexibility than insecure individuals. It can be seen as an important development basis from which the capacity for 'reality oriented' imagining emerges. The greatest vulnerability to psychopathology, however, is thought to stem not from insecurity but from 'unclassified' or 'disorganized' attachment (Fonagy 2001; Lyons-Ruth & Jacobvitz 2008). Disorganized attachment has been linked to numerous relational difficulties in middle childhood and adulthood, with 'disorganized' individuals being considered more vulnerable than those who are simply 'insecure'. For example, in one sample of low income maltreated infants 82% were classed as 'disorganized' (Fonagy 2001: 42), demonstrating a clear link between adverse early circumstances and the ability to develop a predictive internal working model of one's immediate social and



emotional environment. Unlike insecure attachment, disorganized attachment is perhaps most accurately construed as the *failure to form* a consistent attachment narrative, often leading to bizarre and contradictory behaviour on the part of the child in the 'Strange Situation' (Ainsworth & Bell 1970). As described by Lyons-Ruth and Jacobvitz:

One unclassifiable infant, for example, cried loudly while attempting to gain her mother's lap, then suddenly fell silent and stopped moving for several seconds. Others were observed: rocking on hands and knees following an abortive approach; moving away from the parent to the wall when apparently frightened by the stranger; screaming by the door upon separation from the parent and then moving silently away upon reunion; raising hand to mouth in an apprehensive gesture immediately upon seeing the parent; and, while in an apparently good mood, swiping at the parent's face with a trancelike expression (Lyons-Ruth and Jacobvitz 2008:676).

It has been suggested that disorganized attachment is a result of the caregiver being perceived as simultaneously a source of comfort and danger, disrupting normal approach and avoid behaviour (Hopkins 2016). It has been linked to caregivers who are either frightening or frightened, leading Mary Main to describe it as "fear without a solution" (Shemmings & Shemmings 2011: 34). This is especially important for the current project, as it highlights once again the predominance of predictability over pleasure in regulating psychological experiences.

In situating these three attachment styles (secure, insecure and disorganized) within the focus on the subject's capacity form an epistemologically healthy relationship with reality, it will be helpful to return to John McDowell's epistemological

dilemma in “Mind and World” (1996). McDowell presents the ideal epistemological subject as a free and rational thinker who nevertheless is open to what is being ‘given’ from an environment that is genuinely independent from the subject’s mind or perspective. Taken as a metaphor, McDowell’s account can help illuminate how secure attachment enables an epistemologically sound relationship with the world from a psychoanalytic perspective: secure individuals can be seen to embody an analogous position to McDowell’s ideal epistemological subject. Unlike disorganized individuals, secure individuals are able to interpret the social world within a coherent and meaningful narrative. At the same time, their sensitivity towards novelty in interpersonal scenarios grants secure individuals more ‘friction’ with contingent situations than their insecure counterparts, who we have seen let past situations dominate the interpretation of current ones in a manner that diminishes their ability to learn new social and emotional information and can lead to overly rigid patterns of interpretation and relating.

### **Mentalizing and Theory of Mind**

Mentalization, as we have seen, is essentially the process of regulating affect through the representation and understanding of psychological states belonging to self and other (Bateman & Fonagy 2007, 2010; Fonagy et. al. 2002; Fonagy & Luyten 2007, 2009) .In mature adults, the capacity to mentalize emerges across various dimensions: it may be automatic or controlled, based on internal or external features of self and other, primarily cognitive or affective, representing a range of ways in which people can engage in mature, empathetic social cognition (Fonagy & Luyten 2009). Its multifaceted nature has led some authors to conclude that:

This theoretical framework, which we will refer to as the theory of mentalization, is probably not yet to be seen as a full-fledged theory. Rather it is as a framework which is still developing, and consists of a number of conceptual innovations, distinctions, hypotheses, and suggestions. Therefore, the theory of mentalization, at the present stage, should not be expected to be complete and free from inconsistencies (Liljenfors & Lundh 2015:37).

Keeping this in mind, the mentalization model can be consistent in its portrayal of the imagination as a state of mind in which the individual is open to emotional learning and seeks out psychological knowledge about self and other (Fonagy et. al. 2002, 2017a, 2017b). In this sense, epitomizes 'reality oriented' imagining. In order to fully grasp how the capacity for 'mentalizing' imagination develops it will be helpful to draw out the deep links that it has with both attachment theory and more generic 'theory of mind' research (Dennett 1991; Gopnik 2009).

It will now be necessary to consider interpersonal understanding from another relevant perspective. In healthy adult life, the behaviour of others is rendered explainable by the automatic deployment of a 'theory of mind'. Like attachment theory, 'theory of mind' has strong links with a 'mentalizing' account of development. Perhaps more importantly, considering 'theory of mind' in development can offer empirical support for the argument presented in Chapter Three, by demonstrating that the infant is inherently geared towards the external interpersonal world from early in life (Fonagy et.al. 2002, Gopnik 2009). 'False belief' experiments with young children arguably provide evidence to suggest that the immature mind is characterised by an *excessive focus on external events* at the expense of internal psychological processes, challenging the Freudian account of psychological immaturity as the excessive influence of internal processes. This important

recognition, I will argue, can be used to emphasise the importance of the self in 'reality oriented' imagining, allowing the Freudian reality principle to be reframed in Winnicottian terms (Winnicott 1971/2005:71 -86).

'Mindreading' is a skill that most people employ automatically and unreflectively in their everyday lives (Baron-Cohen 1995). A rather mundane example of an automatic application of 'theory of mind' run as follows: if I were to see a person pick up a glass and drink, I would implicitly make sense of his behaviour by assuming that he desired to have a drink and believed that picking up the glass would allow him to do this (Costal & Leudar 2009; Hopkins 2012, 2015). When behaviour is interpreted solely in terms of physical behaviour without the accompanying imaginative interpretation, this is taken to signal psychopathology (Baron-Cohen 1995; Schuwerk et. al. 2016). Simon Baron-Cohen, in his analysis of the prevalence of this in Autism Spectrum Disorders has termed the failure to interpret interpersonal data in terms of theory of mind as 'mindblindness' (Baron Cohen et al. 1995)<sup>45</sup>. Conversely, one can attempt to understand other people 'intentionally', as psychological beings whose actions reveal underlying states of mind, and whose mental states can be construed as *reasons* for their actions, rather than simply causes of their actions (Dennett 1991, Gardner 1993, Hopkins 2015).

At 9 months infants are said to undergo a "social revolution" in which their interest in the (potentially) perfect contingencies of their own bodily movements is replaced by a heightened responsiveness to the *high but not perfect level of*

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<sup>45</sup> The difference between a 'mindblind' and a 'mindreading' stance has been famously described by the philosopher Daniel Dennett (Dennett 1981). Dennett's analysis of the different modes of interpretation highlight that it is possible, on the one hand, to look at people as physical beings with a focus purely on their external characteristics and behaviour, leading to a mechanistic view of their actions as products of physical cause and effect.

*contingencies* that characterise successful social interactions (as people are considerably more complex and difficult to predict than physical objects, perfect contingent responses do not exist in the social realm) (Fonagy et al 2004:222). Although they are socially attuned from the beginning of life (see Fonagy et. al. 2002: 155), infants gain a new insight into goal-related actions towards the end of the first year of life (Fonagy et al 2004:222). At this stage, they begin to understand behaviour in terms of intentions and rational action, demonstrating the capacity to represent other's behaviour as goal-directed and will express particular curiosity towards individuals who take an irrational path of action towards a goal, demonstrating a sensitivity for behaviour which does not simply *cause* an event but which *justifies* it (Fonagy et. al. 2002:223). This, at the age of two years, grows into a rudimentary ability to adopt the 'intentional stance' (Dennett 1991) in which other's behaviour is rendered predictable through the postulation of unobservable mental states (beliefs, desires and intentions) (See Chapter Six).

It is possible to tie the infant's representation of rational action to the Bayesian neuroscience which underpins the 'complexity' model of dreaming and mental disorder (Hopkins 2016). As explained, the Bayesian Brain model postulates that the brain is an inference machine which interprets the world in a way that it can *unify as much data as possible into an encompassing hypothesis or model* (Clark 2016; 2012; Hopkins 2015). It does this by following a method similar to the Bayesian approach to statistics, which states that a hypothesis is sound if the given data are more predictable given the hypothesis than without it (Friston 2012). One can argue

that our common-sense understanding of one another follows a similar structure (see Hopkins 2012, 2013 and Chapter Three)<sup>46</sup>.

Despite this, numerous studies have shown that children up until the age of four do not possess a mature, full-fledged ‘theory of mind’ (Goldman 2012, Gopnik 2009). The most commonly cited example of a psychological study that demonstrates this is known as a ‘false belief experiment’, which typically would run as follows: A three-year old, shown a Smarties tube, is asked what they think it will contain. Invariably, the child will answer that they think it contains Smarties. The experimenter opens up the Smarties tube to reveal it contains pencils, and then asks the child what they thought was in the tube *before* they saw the pencils. Children under 4 are very likely to respond that they thought the Smarties tube contained pencils even before it was opened up. Similarly, when asked to guess what the next child will think is in the tube (before it is opened up), they will answer that the child will think the tube contains pencils (Goldman 2012: 405). In both cases, the child fails to grasp the notion of a *false belief*: they can attribute a false belief neither to their past self nor to another child and can only represent states of mind that are congruent with observable ‘facts’ (Gopnik 2009). Fonagy and colleagues point out that this presents a rather different picture of the respective roles of psychic and external reality in the child’s experience than that proposed by Freud. Rather than framing the world in terms of their own mind, children as old as 4 are inclined instead to *fit their mind to the external environment*, swapping out internal experience in favour of external facts (or what they take to be external facts) if there appears to be a conflict between mind and

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<sup>46</sup> This follows a line of thought introduced in philosophy of mind by Donald Davidson who argued that, in rational action, an agent’s *reasons* for acting serve as the *cause* of their action. This view was presented against the Wittgensteinian position that reasons and causes are distinct modes of explanation (for an extended account of how this principle may be relevant to psychoanalytic theory see Cavell 1992).

world that they cannot cognitively manoeuvre. Contrary to common psychoanalytic assumption, such experiments may suggest that young children are more likely to ‘mis-perceive’ their internal world by experiencing it as more similar to the external environment than it actually is, rather than perceiving the external world in a way that has been skewed by internally generated phantasies (Fonagy et al 2002: 58 – 61). The young child, as a result, “is more like a weather vane than a psychotic person” (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 61). This may serve to highlight the fact that the internal world must be cultivated in development and cannot be taken for granted, an account of which can be drawn from the mentalization literature.

One of the major ways in mentalization differs from classic ‘theory of mind’ is in its proposal that the capacity to mentalize is a developmental achievement, rather than a biological given (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 16. 53). The capacity for reflective functioning, it has been argued, flourishes in attachment relationships with sensitively attuned care-givers who mirror infant’s states of mind back to them (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 192) In this sense, it follows psychoanalytic insights of thinkers such as Winnicott (1971/2005) and Bion (1962/1984) (both discussed previously) who attribute similar functions of mirroring and containment to the maternal environment.

### **Two Developmental Pathways**

The ‘complexity’ and mentalization models both use attachment theory as the developmental model upon which they base their theories of psychopathology (Hopkins 2016:8, Fonagy & Luyten 2009: 1356). The infant’s need to securely attach to a caregiver is given a prominent role in both accounts, seemingly signifying a move away from instinct theory and towards the recognition that the external interpersonal environment is important in the development of a healthy mind (see

Greenberg & Mitchell 1983). It can be argued that this movement has been partly achieved in both models by the substitution of the Freudian drive with ‘affects’, which described as being one of the prime driving forces of infantile mental life in both models (Enckell 2007; Panksepp 2012; Solms & Zellner 2012). An increased focus on the role of affect over the past few decades, especially from a biological perspective, could signal a move back to classic instinct theory which had otherwise been largely abandoned in psychoanalytic theory and practice (see Chapter Four) (Panksepp 2012; Solms & Zellner 2012). There are intuitive similarities between affects and instincts: both are strong motivating forces in human life, both are depicted as a-rational and, perhaps most importantly, neither are considered to have an inherently representational structure (Solms 2013).

There are, however, salient differences between instincts as Freud (and one could say Klein) conceived of them and the ‘affects’ of modern neuroscience in terms of both their function and their content. These differences largely fall in line with the shifts in psychoanalytic theory described in Chapter Three: affects have closer links with interpersonal relationships and often need to be regulated in the *context of a relationship* rather than simply through another person as an object (Bowlby 1979/2005; Fonagy et al 2002). Affects are also bound up to a greater extent with ‘epistemic’ concerns than instincts; they are regulated in part through being *understood* by a caregiver and, later in development, being understood by the self (Fonagy et al 2004: 153). This entails that the mother’s understanding of the infant’s emotional state is not simply a pre-requisite to providing the right form of physical satiation (such as taking crying to indicate hunger) but appears to provide a soothing effect *in and of itself* (Fonagy et al. 2002: 191-192).



In what follows, I will sketch two alternative developmental trajectories in which infants come to depend on different forms of imagining in order to regulate affect. These will show how fictive and interpersonal imaginative forms of experience could exist in tension with one another. In the first, failures in maternal containment can be linked to the adoption of ‘complexity’ reducing psychological activity in waking life which, as we have seen, may underlie various forms of psychopathology (Hopkins 2016:8-9). In the second ‘good-enough’ scenario, I will show how effective mirroring may lead not only to a reduced need for fictive explanations but to the active creation of a new depth of psychological experience, which has strong ties to the phenomenological experience of self and agency (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 248) The approach below should be taken as highly schematic for the purposes of theoretical elucidation: there is no implication that any individual’s real life developmental history is quite this simple.

### **Complexity and Disorganization**

Following the trend mentioned above, Hopkins argues that affects provide the motivational fuel for infants from the beginning of life. While affects do not replace bodily needs, which obviously remain imperative, they are presented as playing a significant role in a manner which embodies many of the assumptions of object relations theory over traditional drive theory. As he describes:

Basic expectations connected with biological imperatives like homeostasis are woven into the functioning of the brainstem. Comprehensive motor responses to the FE produced by these are required for all aspects of thriving and development. From birth such responses are generated by motoric “prototype emotions systems” delineated in Panksepp (1998), which also perform the

motivational work that Freud assigned to the drives (see Damasio and Carvalho, 2013). Watt and Panksepp (2009, p. 98) describe these as “sitting over homeostasis proper (hunger, thirst, temperature regulation, pain, etc.)” (Hopkins, 2016: 3).

Affects, it is recognised, must be regulated through interaction, with the failure to do so carrying the risk of disorganised attachment (see above). From the Bayesian point of view, disorganisation is understood as fuelled by conflicting emotions which create incoherent trajectories for action which subsequently fail to be regulated by internal representational schemas, as such schemas were not forthcoming from the caregiver (Hopkins 2016:9) . The ‘cumulative trauma’ of infinite instances of misattunement and misrecognition “deprives the infants (as their mothers may have been deprived) of opportunities for learning in emotional interaction, and so for internalizing in their own regulative models the understanding responses of others. Instead they apparently learn that their conflicts and distress are unsharable, intolerable, and not to be recognized or known” (Hopkins 2016: 9).

It is therefore possible to demonstrate how attachment theory and ‘theory of mind’ can act as a developmental foundation for the ‘complexity model’ (see Chapter Five), showing how the overreliance on ‘reality indifferent’ imaginative processes (‘fictive beliefs’) may have their origin in failed attachment relationships, much like deficiencies in mentalizing. Yet, following Winnicott, this thesis aims to present an account of conscious functioning which is defined by more than the absence of psychopathology (Winnicott 1971/2005: 88- 114, 128-139): this is precisely the role of the ‘reality oriented’ imagination. In what follows, I will establish a basis for ‘reality oriented’ imagining using developmental perspectives from the mentalization model by demonstrating not only that it can be differentiated from straightforward veridical

perception (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 222- 223), but how it is inherently linked with a growing sense of self and agency (Fonagy et, al 2002:248). The following chapter will then take up the task of unpacking these themes on a phenomenological and conceptual level.

### **The ‘Self’ from a Mentalizing Perspective**

It will be useful to begin by giving a brief overview of development of the self from a mentalizing perspective. The mentalization model provides an original take on several features of everyday human experience by demonstrating how they are developmental achievements rather than simple givens. We have already seen how this applies to the human ability for ‘mind reading’ (the intentional stance (Dennett 1991)); a psychological ‘skill’ that develops as a result of adequate interactions with early caregivers which are characterised by marked mirroring (Fonagy et. al 2002; Fonagy & Luyten 2009). The capacity for mentalizing has also been linked with a robust and stable experience of the self (Fonagy & Luyten 2016). While a level of bodily ‘selfhood’, may be taken for granted, this can subsequently be elaborated on to provide richer and more varied experiential states which can reach the status of a sound imaginative relationship with the world. Each of these levels entails a different implicit understanding of the self *as an agent*. There are a total of five forms that an understanding of self and agency can take: physical, social, teleological, intentional and representational. In ‘good enough’ circumstances, these five stages represent a developmental timeline of an infant’s growing understanding of an ‘agentive’ self.

The final ‘representational’ stage is the most relevant to the current discussion, as it is the form that can best be linked with mature mentalizing and the ‘reality oriented’ imagination (Fonagy et. al 2002: 203 – 251). Both of the first two stages, the physical and social representations of self, are thought to be operative from very early on in

life (Fonagy et. al 2002:207-209). The former, as might be expected, understands the self as a physical agent who can enact physical change in her proximate environment. A primitive form of social understanding also operates early in life as infants are able to grasp that they create behavioural effects in other humans. This grows into a teleological understanding at around 9 months of age, when infants become able to differentiate actions and outcomes (Fonagy et. al. 2002:222). Later on, this becomes an ability to take an 'intentional stance' in which human action is interpreted in terms of beliefs, desires and intentions. As we have seen, this continues to mature throughout early childhood, with the ability to represent false beliefs surfacing at between three to four years of age (Fonagy et. al. 2002:242 – 245). At this stage, the individual is taken to have a 'representational self'. Underpinning this developmental trajectory is a deeper capacity to *experience oneself as an agent*, a dimension of experience which is thought to be set up (if not fully actualized) in early attachment relationships (Fonagy, Luyten & Allison 2015:588).

### **Contingency and Agency**

As important feature of the successful regulation of affect, therefore, is an experiential sense of agency which can then be used as a foundation for an experiential sense of self. This sense of self will, in the course of a successful development, transform from a bodily self, to a self as rational agent and, finally, to self as a psychological being. The depth of experience that the child fosters in regards to their own self will determine the extent to which they can attribute psychological experiences to others in a meaningful way (Fonagy et. al 2002:197).

Earlier in this chapter, I explained how the brain's predictive experience of the body's movement is an essential part of physiological regulation that underpins

conscious waking experience (Clark 2016, Hopkins 2016). A similar form of bio-feedback is adopted in the mentalization literature in order to explain how infants self-regulate by learning about the limits of their bodily efficacy and control, which will ideally come to form the basis of psychological agency and emotion regulation as the child matures. The details of this are worth understanding in order to appreciate how a sense of *representational agency* differs from a sense of *bodily agency* (see Fonagy et. al. 2002: 203-251). The differences between these will form an empirical cradle for my assertion that an experiential sense of self as an agent is necessary for 'reality oriented' imaginative engagement. The source of the 'agentive self' is thought to be entwined by a baby's experience of contingency in early caregiving relationships (Fonagy et. al. 2002). In order to understand this connection, it will be necessary to outline how infants use contingency to assess agency in general and then apply this more specifically to close interpersonal relating.

It has been argued that infants learn about their degree of control over the environment through attempts to detect contingencies (Gergely 2004: 470; Gergely & Watson 1999). Consider, for example, a baby trying to ascertain how much control she has over a mobile that she is kicking: in the event that the mobile moves *if and only if* the baby kicks, she will naturally and accurately feel a strong sense of control in relation to it (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 162-163). Checking for degrees of control is performed by two distinct 'calculations': one which works forward in time to check for sufficiency (if I do this, what will happen?) and another which works backwards in time to check for necessity (what caused what I am experiencing?) (Gergely 2004: 473; Fonagy et. al 2002: 163-165). These two values can line up, such as in the example above, but often do not. If, for example, the mobile moves every time the baby kicks it but also sometime moves when she doesn't kick it (because, for

instance, it is moved by the researcher) the baby will feel a diminished sense of control over the object, as kicking is *sufficient but not necessary* for the object to move. The experience of discrepancies between the indexes of sufficiency and necessity in turn prompts behavioural changes. If the mobile only moves when it is kicked by the baby's right leg and not the left, her experience of 50% control will lead her to experiment by reducing the number of activities she is performing in order to work out the scope of her agency. This, if successful, will lead her to obtain total control over the object by kicking her right leg only (Fonagy et. al. 2002:164).

A similar pattern of behaviour modulation occurs in relation affect regulation with the caregiver. This, it has been argued, may be achieved through the infant's experience of parental emotive expressions that occur *contingently* which their own affective expressions (Gergely 2004; Gergely & Watson 1999; Fonagy et. al. 2002: 168). In accordance with the contingency-detection mechanisms described above, infants will attempt to 'make sense' of parental affective expression in part by scanning for internal cues which might explain what caused the parental expression to come about. This will also work the other way: the baby will monitor the effect of certain sets of internal cues on the parents in order to map an increasingly differentiated and complex set of subjective states onto observable effects (in this case, the expressions and behaviour of others) in the external world (Gergely 2004; Gergely & Watson 1999).

Adopting this stance heightens the importance of the genuine interpersonal conditions in development, as in order for such a process to work well, parents must be at least somewhat sensitive to affective displays in their infants. If an infant's cries produce wildly different responses from the parents each time, it will be difficult for the baby to lump together the relevant internal cues signalling the presence of felt

distress (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 170). As such, behavioural consistency on the part of the caregiver allows the infant to set up a temporal contingency between their feeling and parental expression which will allow a rudimentary *representative* link to be formed between the two (Fonagy & Luyten 2009: 1359). This alone, however, cannot account for infant coming to recognise the expressed affect as *their own rather than the parents*. This must be achieved through the parents 'marking' their mirrored expressions (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 188 – 189; Fonagy & Luyten 1359). Following the infant's preference for imperfect social contingencies after nine months, the parent will help communicate that their expression represents the infant's feelings (rather than their own) through expressions of affect which are marked, exaggerated and interrupted with 'breaks' or 'time outs' (Fonagy et. al 2002: 172). In 'good enough' scenarios, two systems of representing affects will be set up whose difference will be emphasised by both *the different outcomes they produce* (marked versus realistic expressions) and by *their different relationship to the activity of the infant* (the parent's own affective state will not be temporally contingent with the infant's feelings). This represents the first way in which a sense of self is *conceptually tied* to a sense of agency: it is only through believing that they are the cause of external events (in this case, the parent's affective displays) that infant's begin to build up a representation of a self in order to make sense of the effects they are observing (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 170). It is important to recognise here that a sense of agency at this stage in life is not only necessary for a good sense of self but for a notion of self at all. The baby who experiences a low level of agency in regards to his caregivers will not internalize a sense of the *self –as-ineffective* but, more drastically, will fail to represent a self at all; he does not see any evidence for one reflected in the behaviour of those around him.

There is another important manner in which a sense of agency is constitutive of a sense of self mediated via the infant's ability to self-regulate. Firstly, feelings of control have been linked to a general increase in positive affect, so the sense of controlling the interpersonal environment that arises from successful mirroring exchanges may itself serve to mediate the infant's distress *in itself* (Gergely 2004:470). Additionally, the imperfectness of the parents affect mirroring in has the potential to induce self-regulating behaviour on the part of the infant. As the level of control the infant's has (or rather experiences himself to have) over the caregiver will only be partial at the best of times, this creates a discrepancy between sufficiency and necessity indexes of contingency detection. Such a discrepancy will prompt the infant to reduce the parameters of his behaviour (in this case his affects and their expression) in order to ascertain his true level of mastery over the object, in an analogous manner to experimentally kicking the mobile with only one leg at a time in order to see the extent to which it is under his bodily control (Gergely 2004: 472; Fonagy et. al 2002: 172). If the baby feels reassured he can control the caregiver in times of need, he will feel safe to reduce both his experience and communication of negative affect (where strength of feeling could be correlated with how extreme the infant takes their situation to be and strength of expression linked to the urgency for it to be communicated). Thus a baby who feels fear but believes he has a good control over his caregivers will trust that he can effectively bring about his own comfort via the mother, leading to a diminished experience of distress (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 174). A baby whose sense of agency and mastery has been undermined may, on the other hand, feel such experiences to be genuinely life threatening. This perspective on health and psychopathology has a deep resonance with Winnicott's idea that in order for a healthy adaption to reality to occur the baby must begin with



an illusion of omnipotence which is only gradually taken away from him (Winnicott 1971/2005: 15). The empirical findings presented above demonstrate how the mother's regulation can become internalized as self-regulation: the baby's experience of causing the marked affective expressions of the mother, which in turn soothes their negative feelings, creates the representation of a causal chain which both begins and ends with the self<sup>47</sup>.

It is interesting to note that the development of a sense of self and agency can be seen as entailing a series of necessary illusions which require the input of both the infant and the mother in order to be sustainable (See Winnicott 1971/2005:2-34). The mother, through providing sensitive and contingent responses, grants the infant the illusion that she is under his control, allowing him to develop a sense of agency through his perceived efficacy in his environment. This, interestingly, requires the input of yet another illusion on the part of the mother, who needs to act as though the baby is experiencing thoughts and feelings that, as yet, he is not. Paradoxically, it is only by treating the infant as if he were a subjective being that he is able to become one. I will return to these issues in the following chapter, where I will argue that we can use the Winnicottian notions of creativity and transitional phenomena to offer an alternative description of development which captures the experience of the 'reality oriented' imagination from the infant's perspective (See Winnicott 1971/2005: 1- 34, 71-86).

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<sup>47</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, this reverses the Freudian developmental trajectory in which the aim is to move from self to object by construing development as reduced dependency on the object and increased dependency on the self.

**Conclusion**

Now that the theoretical basis for the development of a 'reality oriented' form of imaginative engagement, it will be possible to turn to a deeper discussion of the conceptual issues at play. In the following chapter, I will aim to flesh out the character of the 'reality oriented' imagination by considering the conceptual links between affect, self and agency in a manner that, I hope, can usefully connect the empirical models described here with non-empirical models in philosophy and psychoanalytic theory. Part of this discussion will be a re-assessment of the relationship between language and image in light of numerous advances since Freud's time.



## **Chapter Seven**

### **Re-Conceptualising the Imagination: Phenomenology, Negative Capability and the 'Agentive Self'**

So far in this thesis I have aimed to give an account of how the dominant notion of the imagination in psychoanalytic theory of mind has shifted from an account of fantastical daydreaming towards a means of meaningful engagement with the external world (Freud 1907, Winnicott 1971/2005: 87). This changing role of the imagination, I have aimed to show, is inextricable from the evolving understanding of the epistemological relationship between the subject and her environment, from one in which the world is presented as straightforwardly 'given' to the individual (albeit highly vulnerable to disruptions by unconscious processes) to one in which the inherent unknowability of 'reality' results in a picture of mental functioning that is driven by the need to predict and explain from the 'bottom up' (Clark 2016; Hopkins 2016; Schimek 1975). In the previous section, I discussed this change from the perspective of empirical advances, suggesting that attempts to link psychoanalysis with empirical disciplines (such as perceptual and affective neuroscience) engender an 'epistemic turn' in psychoanalytic theory that rivals the 'relational turn' in psychoanalytic theory and practice (see Fotopoulou et. al. 2012; Greenberg & Mitchell 1983). The resulting picture is one in which both health and pathology can be understood as containing constitutive epistemological elements, while simultaneously re-incorporating core dimensions of Freudian thinking such as the reliance on 'fictive' experiences in dreams and psychopathology (Hopkins 2016).

These final two chapters will aim apply to explore how the 'reality oriented' imagination might be captured on an experiential level. Building upon the arguments

in the previous section - in which I drew out the importance of epistemological concerns in development, health and psychopathology - this section will focus upon the important role played by *trust* in being open to 'learning from experience' (Fonagy et. al. 2015, 2017a, 2017b). In establishing the role of trust, I will draw on the concept of 'negative capability' (see Ou 2009), arguing that 'good enough' developmental circumstances foster an attitude of faith in the individual which allows them to take experience to be meaningful despite the fact that many aspects of it are epistemologically opaque. Such an approach, I hope to argue, carries with it the implicit awareness that no clean line can be drawn between imaginative and perceptual experiences (Merleau-Ponty 1968), or between that which has been internally generated and that which has been 'given' from the external world (McDowell 1996; Winnicott 1971/2005:1- 34). I will suggest that one way to approach this is to draw on the concept of 'negative capability' (see below, see Ou 2009).

In capturing 'reality oriented' imagining as an epistemic attitude, I will preserve a central role for the 'agentive self' (Fonagy et. al 2016, 2017a, 2017b). I will argue that a robust sense of self and agency is what stabilises not knowing into 'negative capability'; an active state of mind in which lack of knowledge is transformed into the drive for exploration. Chapter Eight will expand on this insight by returning to 'epistemic trust' as the mode through which an individual forms a relationship with language as a whole.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a re-conceptualisation of the imagination based upon the theoretical and empirical advances that have been discussed thus far. In doing so, I will draw on insights from phenomenological philosophy (e.g, Merleau-Ponty 1968, Sartre 1940, 1943) as well as aiming to re-incorporate classic psychoanalytic insights from Winnicottian theory (Winnicott 1971/2005). Adopting

phenomenology as a general framework will allow for a much needed degree of stability and consistency when discussing and analysing the role of 'reality oriented' imagining. As we saw in the introduction to this work, one of the most insidious problems with researching the imagination is the lack of any stable definition of the term, entailing that where no further qualification is added it risks being rendered meaningless (Stevenson 2003). Although there is far from a consensus on the role of the imagination and its relation to perception across phenomenological works, it can nevertheless operate as a form of 'background' philosophy for the concept of 'reality oriented' imagining; elucidating which important issues are at play, even if it cannot offer definitive resolution. More specifically, I will suggest some introductory links that can be made between the 'reality oriented' imagination and phenomenological literature, aiming to show that, in spite of some very broad differences in approach, phenomenological accounts present the imagining subject as engaged in attempts to come to know and explore reality (Lennon 2015; Morley 2003). Where veridical perception is supplemented by imaginative elements, or even wholesale replaced by them (see Sartre 1940, 1943) this is nevertheless with the aim of elucidating features of reality that cannot be given directly in perception, exploring possibilities for future action or engaging with cultural and creative works (Lennon 2015; Merleau-Ponty 1968). It is not, as per the Freudian account, a form of denying or modifying external reality in line with internal needs but rather a means by which the reality can be opened out to the individual in a meaningful way (Lennon 2015). These works may therefore offer a good general framework for a conceptualization of the imaginative that avoids many of the pitfalls that are engendered in a more traditional understanding of the term, in which it is primarily linked with imagistic representations and acts of fantasy (Descartes 1641/1924; Freud 1907): a reading

which I have argued does not make best use of the empirical and conceptual insights at hand (Clark 2016; Hopkins 2016; Winnicott 1971/2005).

A related concept that will also form an important part of this chapter is ‘negative capability’ (Bion 1984; Hopkins 1984; Ou 2009). ‘Negative capability’ (a concept that is drawn on liberally in psychoanalytic scholarship yet rarely explicitly thematised) is a phrase coined by poet John Keats to describe a state of mind in which “a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (Keats 1899 quoted in Hopkins 1984: 85). Throughout this chapter, I will aim to show how ‘negative capability’ can be used in concert with insights from a phenomenological approach to the imagination to capture the epistemological dimension of ‘reality oriented’ imagining. In doing so, I will propose that being in state of ‘negative capability’ is not *sufficient* for ‘reality oriented’ imagining. As we saw at some length in the previous chapter, the mentalization literature states that successful reflective functioning (which for the purposes of the current argument I am classing as a prime example of ‘reality oriented’ imagining) goes beyond a capacity to learn from experiences and also requires a the enduring experience of an ‘agentive self’ (Fonagy 2002 et. al. 205 -251). In order to draw aspects of self, agency and negative capability together, I will conclude this chapter with the suggestion that it is the phenomenological experience of an agentive self which *stabilises* simple uncertainty into true ‘negative capability’. On this view, it is the implicit recognition of the self as efficacious that can transform ‘not knowing’ into active curiosity; a drive for seeking out new experiences and perspectives that is a necessary pre-requisite for performing sophisticated psychological tasks such as reflective functioning.

### **Perception and Imagination Revisited**

It will be useful to begin by returning to the respective roles of imagination and perception Freudian psychoanalysis so that it can be clearly contrasted with the alternative view presented here. The reading of the Freudian imagination which I presented in the first section of this work was centred on the relationship between imagination and perception. Freud, I argued, maintained a strict conceptual difference between the two, linking them with his pleasure and reality principles respectively (Freud 1895/1950, 1911, 1923). Imagination, as a pleasure driven process, usually arises in the form of fantastical daydreams which direct the individual's attention away from the external world towards internally generated fantastical scenes (Freud 1907). These, much like night dreams, are the disguised derivatives of unconscious phantasies, though benefitting from a much greater degree of censorship and structure (Freud 1901, 1907). Less often, Freud presents the imagination as an outward facing process which co-opts perception in its own interest, the most notable example of which is Freud's theory of transference in which the analyst (or another close figure in the patient's life) is experienced unconsciously as though they were an important figure from the past (Freud 1912). Although one could take Freud's theory of transference as evidence that he believed perception is inherently imaginative, I argued that this position does not appreciate the subtleties of Freudian metapsychology or take into account the scientific principles which informed his outlook (Schimek 1975). I argued that Freud considered perception, generally speaking, as consisting of the straightforward registration of sensory data which is then vulnerable to taken over from the outside by dynamically unconscious thought (Schimek 1975). In other words, while Freud may have maintained that subjective 'distortions' are an inevitable part of human



experience taken as a whole (accounting for the influence of the unconscious), he did not see them as necessary aspect of *perception itself* (as is the case in ‘active perception’ and ‘predictive processing’, see Chapters Four and Five).

Freud’s position, while it may give rise to a similar manifest experience as ‘active’ perception (see Clark 2016, Hopkins 2016, Raftopolous 2009), nevertheless differs from it in two important ways. Firstly, it maintains a *notional* difference between perception and phantasy that can be seen to inform the aims of clinical psychoanalysis, which purports to replace the unrealistic (‘reality indifferent’) primary process with the realistic secondary process. It allows for the possibility – if only as an ‘ideal fiction’ (Freud 1937:235) – that unmediated access to the external world is possible if one could only surmount one’s internal phantasies and conflicts. Secondly, the fact that perception is portrayed as being distorted by unconscious processes rather than containing *inherent* distortions encourages the view, or so I have argued, that imaginative elements in perception serve to distance the perceiver from ‘reality’ (Freud 1907). In accounts such as the Bayesian Brain, distortions do not disrupt naïve access to the world but are rather the means through which the perception of a coherent scene becomes possible (making the term ‘distortion’ arguably inaccurate in this case. I will return to this line of thought below) (Clark 2016). Freud’s conceptualization of perception as ‘naïve’ can therefore be directly linked to his portrayal of the imagination as a process which insulates the individual from external reality. It is in part because the imagination is not needed for knowledge or exploration of the world that it is construed as actively functioning against it. Conversely, accounts of perception and imagination from a phenomenological perspective can serve as a useful framework for the ‘reality oriented’ imagination (Lennon 2015; Merleau-Ponty 1968).

## Psychoanalysis and Phenomenology

Phenomenology and psychoanalysis have experienced a contentious history, perhaps most famously through Sartre's refutation of Freudian theory in "Being and Nothingness" (Sartre 1940/2004, also see Gardner 1993). In placing a strict emphasis on manifest experience, phenomenology seems naturally at odds with psychoanalytic approaches, as the latter make it their aim to look for what is *behind* or *underneath* experience. In light of this, there is an important clarification in terminology which will be necessary to address before potential unifications between phenomenology and psychoanalytic theory can be considered. As Gallagher and Zahavi (2008) discuss, there are two ways in which the term 'phenomenology' is commonly employed: in a general sense to describe the subjective feel (the 'qualia') of experience, and in a technical sense which refers to the intellectual movement within philosophy which is thought to originate with the works of Edmund Husserl (Gallagher & Zahavi: 28). This distinction is important in understanding phenomenological works, which do not seek to describe experience from a first-person perspective but, following a Kantian legacy, attempt to establish the *necessary conditions of experience*. Gallagher and Zahavi argue that this puts phenomenology at odds with a kind of subjectivity that interests the psychotherapist:

Phenomenology has as its goal, not a description of idiosyncratic experience – 'here and now, this is what I just experience' – rather, it attempts to capture the invariant structures of experience. In this sense, it is more like science than psychotherapy. Psychotherapy is focused on the subject as a particular person and may appeal to introspection in its concern about the way and why of the person's experience of the world, here and now. By contrast, phenomenology is not interested in understanding the world according to Gallagher, or the world

according to Zahavi, or the world according to you; it's interested in understanding *how it is possible* for *anyone* to experience a world. In this sense, phenomenology is not interested in qualia in the sense of purely individual data that are incorrigible, ineffable and incomparable. Phenomenology is interested in the very possibility and structure of phenomenality; it seeks to explore essential structures that are intersubjectively accessible, and its analyses are open for corrections and control by any (phenomenologically attuned) subject (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008: 28).

Gallagher and Zahavi root their juxtaposition of phenomenology and psychotherapy in the recognition that one deals with what is individual about experience (psychotherapy) where the other looks at what is universal about it (phenomenology). Yet in focusing on a stripped-down account of 'introspection' - a highly general feature of the clinical situation and one that is common across all psychotherapeutic schools of thought - an important feature of a psychoanalytic approach to understanding mind and psychopathology is missed. While the authors are right that it would be inappropriate to conceive of a psychotherapy patient as a budding phenomenologist, it can be argued that psychoanalytic theory, especially from a developmental perspective, does concern itself with establishing the *conditions under which certain forms of conscious experience can arise*. Within the mentalization model, for instance, we saw in the previous chapter how a robust underlying sense of agency is established within the context of a secure relationship in which the caregiver is contingently responsive to the infant's expressions of affect (Fonagy et. al. 2002, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). For Winnicott, the holding environment determines the extent to which the subject can experience herself as an embodied self, capable of spontaneity and creative living (Winnicott 1971/2005). In Bion, a

similar theme can be seen to manifest in his discussions of the intersubjective conditions that enable the subject to *think* (Bion 1962/1984). In these examples, the emphasis does not lie on uncovering the unconscious causes of conscious experience but on the conditions – normally external and interpersonal (see Chapter Three)- that make it possible for the subject to have access to certain dimensions of conscious experience in the first place. In this sense, psychoanalysis both resonates with phenomenology and stands diametrically opposed to it: where both disciplines are invested in understanding why human conscious experience has certain structural features, psychoanalysis radically disrupts the phenomenologist's tasks by demonstrating how features of experience that are ostensibly essential can in fact be attributed to an identifiable set of empirical developmental conditions. This comes through with particular vigour in the mentalization model which makes it a central aim to elucidate the fact that psychological capacities often taken for granted (notably, a sense of self as an agent and the capacity to interpret self and others in terms of underlying mental states) are in fact developmental achievements (Fonagy et. al. 2002). After sketching some theories on imaginative experience from a phenomenological point of view, I will outline some ways in which these can break down in psychopathology arguing that phenomenology grasps a form of experience that is conceptually close to 'reality oriented' imagining but without the recognition that access to such forms of experience is a developmental achievement.

### **Phenomenological Views of Perception**

Phenomenological accounts place high level of importance of the role of perception in our access to the external world. This can be seen to form a natural part of their 'philosophical project' to bring rationality "down to earth" (Morris 2014) and begin with the world *as it is experienced*, rather than as it is conceptualized in rational or

scientific discourse (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008; Lennon 2015). Despite the emphasis in phenomenology on the world *as given*, it contrasts markedly with the empirical accounts of perception that were dominant during Freud's time (see Makari 1994, 2008; Reeves 1969). Rather than breaking perception down into units of sensation that can be associatively strung together, the phenomenological approach emphasises that perception is experienced holistically; a gestalt which is presented as loaded with meaning (Morley 2003:94-96). According to the phenomenological perspective we are "pragmatic perceivers" (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008: 109) who experience the world as a salient whole that is primed for action and socialization (Lennon 2015; Steeves 2004).

In order to understand the manner in which phenomenological analyses generally portray the imagination as 'reality oriented' it will be useful to set some context by considering how phenomenology frames the epistemological relationship between mind and world. In focusing on manifest experiences phenomenology can be seen to set up an epistemically straightforward relationship between the subject and her environment in a manner resonant of 'naïve' perception (See Chapter Two) (Lennon 2015; Morris 2014; Steeves 2004). Read in this manner, phenomenological accounts are set radically against the empirical models of perception that I have appealed to so far: 'predictive processing' models like the 'Bayesian Brain' which argue that perceptual consciousness is generated by the brain's attempt to predict the causes of incoming sensory data (Clark 2012; Friston 2012; Hopkins 2012, 2016). Accounts which present perception as an 'active', generative force are often taken to implicitly endorse a worldview in which perceptual representations create a form of metaphorical curtain between the perceiver and the external world, blocking the possibility of direct access to 'things in themselves' (Clark 2016; Gallagher &

Zahavi 2008). Gallagher and Zahavi, arguing that “some version of this view (mediated through the work of Hermann von Helmholtz) is still endorsed by numerous neuroscientists” (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008: 103), claim that this sets contemporary empirical approaches at odds with phenomenology, which actively rejects the notion that the world can only be accessed via our representation of it. They continue, outlining the ‘faulty’ philosophy which they consider to be operating in background of neuroscientific accounts of perception:

As long as this kind of view is meant to suggest that we actually perceive internal pictures, it is open to phenomenological criticism; not only is it not in accordance with phenomenological evidence, but the view also entails a highly problematic use of the notions of both ‘perception’ and ‘picture’. Rather than saying that the perceiving brain constructs an internal representation of the perceived world, it would be far less controversial simply to claim that our brain enables us to see a visual scene (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008: 104).

Far from opposing this view, the ‘predictive processing’ model can be seen to support it. For example, Andy Clark argues that characterising the brain’s generative representations as somehow blocking one’s access to reality (and therefore fulfilling a function not unlike the Freudian imagination) appeals to the wrong overarching metaphor. As he writes:

Despite all this, I think we should resist the claim that what we perceive is best understood as a kind of hypothesis, model, fantasy or virtual reality. The temptation to think so, it seems to me, rests on two mistakes. The first mistake is to conceive of inference-based routes to adaptive response as introducing a kind of representational veil between agent and world. Instead, it is only through the

structured probabilistic know-how distilled from prediction driven learning that enables us to see through the veil of surface statistics to the world of distal interacting causes itself (Clark 2016: 170).

In other words, we can just as equally see ‘active’ perception as the only means through which a world, in any meaningful sense of the term for human beings, can be revealed and opened out to us; this is precisely the starting point that phenomenologists adopt. Where phenomenological accounts can go above and beyond the empirical theory is in their descriptions of how the world is laid out to the individual as affectively laden with meaning (Lennon 2015). In doing so, they can offer a ‘partial re-enchantment’ (McDowell 1996 quoted in Lennon 2015:11) of a naturalized world (Collin 2011).

### **Phenomenology and ‘Reality Oriented’ Imagining: Insights from Sartre and Merleau Ponty**

Perhaps the most important ways in which phenomenological accounts of the imagination are an appropriate underlying philosophy for the ‘reality oriented’ imagination is through their rejection of the *representational view* of the imagination as images within the head and towards a view of imagining as a mode of consciousness (Sartre 1940/2004, 1943/2009; Steeves 2004: 33-50). While they reserve important roles for ‘visuality’ and affect through asserting the primary role of perception and the importance of grounded bodily experience, this approach nevertheless transforms the imagination from an internal phenomena into one which acts as a bridge between the subject and the world (Lennon 2015:1). In addition, there is a strong trend within phenomenology in which the imagination is portrayed as the mode through which agency and freedom are manifest (Lennon 2015; 32; Reeves 2004: 94-98; Sartre 1943/2009). Combined, these factors lead to a suitable

theoretical arena in which to consider the account of the ‘reality oriented’ imagination.

In *Imagination and the Imaginary* Kathleen Lennon (2015) argues that both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty appeal to a metaphor of *pregnancy* in their descriptions of experience, in which the world is presented as ‘overflowing’ the concrete givens of perception (Lennon 2015: 32-49). Where Sartre and Merleau-Ponty differ markedly is in their understanding of the relationship between imagination and perception (Lennon 2015:48). For Sartre, the strict division between imagination and perception is precisely what allows for ‘re-enchantment’: it gives human consciousness a *sui generis* nature (this is consciousness for-itself rather than consciousness in-itself) which makes space for the possibility of freedom in a determined universe (Sartre 1943/2009). From this perspective, freedom is the act of looking beyond the material givens of a situation in order to experience what is absent: a freedom constituted is in the distinctly human capacity for *negation* (Sartre 1943). In an often quoted example, he argues that to imagine Pierre in the café is to both negate the veridical scene in front of one’s eyes (which does not contain Pierre) and then, in a second evocation of the negative, to present Pierre *as absent* (Lennon 2015: 34; Sartre 1940/2004, 1943/2009). Imagination for Sartre is therefore an active, self-conscious force which cannot be confused with veridical perception: in an act of imagination one decides to replace passive perceiving consciousness with active imagining consciousness (Lennon 2015: 38-39; McGinn 2004).

While the difference between ‘reality oriented’ imagining and veridical perception has been emphasised in this thesis, the distinctions do not follow the lines drawn by Sartre. This is, in part, because on Sartre’s own grounds - namely, the phenomenological – I follow Lennon in resisting a sharp distinction between the two



(Lennon.2015). For example, mentalizing accounts of development do not give rise to a scenario in which the capacity for reflective functioning is either wholly present or wholly absent. In fact, this approach arguably makes a unique contribution to accounts of psychopathology by arguing that on the level of manifest experience the capacity for mentalizing in accordance with an agentic self varies across both individuals and situations (Fonagy et. al 2017a, 2017b). On a similar token, Winnicott gives no particular reason to suppose that the 'creative' mind-set should either be wholly present or wholly absent (Winnicott 1971/2005). In this regard, the relationship between veridical perception and 'reality oriented' imagination is better understood in terms of Merleau-Ponty's (1968) account of the continuum between imagining and perceiving. As we shall see shortly, the account that Merleau-Ponty gives of perceptual experience not only has a more natural resonance with empirical accounts of 'active perception' but also draws in highly relevant epistemic concerns through his notion of 'perceptual faith' (Merleau-Ponty 1968:1; Morley 2003).

Merleau-Ponty did not force a radical distinction between imagining and perceiving, arguing instead that the imaginary is embedded within the real; that the real has an 'imaginary texture' (Lennon 2010, 2015). The phenomenology that this evokes is arguably closer to capturing the 'reality oriented' imagination than Sartre's account of 'imagining consciousness' as it portrays the imagination as something that can augment and enrich perceptual experience, not as something that replaces it (Merleau-Ponty 1968; Steeves 2004). At times, his account of the imagination as something which opens the world out to the individual is resonant of Winnicott's definition of creativity as essentially the 'colouring of the whole attitude' (Winnicott 1971/2005:87).

Merleau-Ponty is especially useful for our current purposes as he gives an account of psychopathology which involves a breakdown in the imagination and our epistemological relationship with the world (Merleau-Ponty 1968; Morley 2003). Merleau-Ponty read Freud extensively. Much like Sartre, his commitment to a phenomenological perspective led him to reject Freud's notion of the unconscious and propose an alternate model of neurosis (Reeves 2004:89-120). In particular, he discusses a case of a young girl who becomes anorexic after being banned from seeing her lover. Rejecting the traditional Freudian interpretation that the anorexia was the symptomatic result of her repressed sexuality which could be cured through insight and catharsis, he presents a view in which neurosis embodies an intolerance of ambiguity which results in a failure of the bodily imagination to serve up alternate possibilities for action (Merleau-Ponty 1968; Steeves 2004). The anorexia, which in this case is portrayed as a kind of hysterical symptom, is a form of collapsing of the patient's future possibilities for action by creating a form of bodily arrest. As such, Merleau-Ponty argues:

[...] existence is not a set of facts (like 'psychic facts') capable of being reduced to others or which they can reduce themselves, but the ambiguous setting of their intercommunication, the point at their boundaries run into each other, or again their woven fabric ( Merleau-Ponty 1968:96).

Merleau-Ponty believed that Freud's primary process was the most strikingly original and useful aspect of his psychoanalysis in so far as it manifests as inherently ambiguous and overdetermined imagistic representations which are carriers for meaning (Steeves 2004:90). It is the capacity to tolerate such ambiguity, he argued, that makes the difference between health and pathology (Morley 2003). In taking this stance, Merleau-Ponty may be guilty of mis-reading Freud's theory of the

primary process: as we saw earlier in this work, the images produced by unconscious process in, for example, dreams may appear ambiguous in the service of censorship, but trains of unconscious thoughts are rigidly deterministic, being caused by linear associations of isolated ideas (Freud 1900, 1915a). Where Merleau-Ponty portrays the imagistic symbol almost like a piece of creative work which permits freedom of expression and interpretation, Freud saw the unconscious as embodying the fundamental principle of psychic determinism (Freud 1915a).

It is perhaps no wonder, then, that Merleau-Ponty arrives at a strikingly different picture of psychopathology to Freud: their fundamentally different interpretations of the primary process can be seen to embody the change in conceptualizing the imagination that I have aimed to chart throughout the course of this thesis. Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on living *within ambiguity* gives his approach a distinct epistemological slant. While Freud, as we have seen at some length, was concerned with self-knowledge as a form of insight, Merleau-Ponty views the psychological relationship one forms to *the act of knowing itself* is important in a manner which can be seen to complement and enhance the empirical advances sketched thus far (e.g. Fonagy et. al. 2017a, 2017b).

### **Perceptual Faith: The Role of Trust in Learning**

Perhaps even more important for the current argument than Merleau-Ponty's astute portrayal of the "imaginary perception of the real" (Lennon 2015:3) is his notion of 'perceptual faith' (at times 'ontological faith') which can be used to elucidate the epistemological dimension of the imagination from a phenomenological perspective (Merleau-Ponty 1968). 'Perceptual faith' is a theoretical construct grounded in the view that imagination and perception exist along a continuum; it aims to capture an attitude of pre-reflective trust we have in our perceptual experiences, whether they

are in fact imaginary (as in dreams) or veridical (Merleau-Ponty 1968, Morley 2003). According to Merleau-Ponty, the dream is disturbing to the newly awakened individual not because of its bizarre content, but because of the immediacy with which it was believed at the time of dreaming. In this important respect, perception and imagination are indistinguishable from one another: both are built about a pre-reflective attitude of faith in what one is experiencing. The capacity to sustain 'perceptual faith' is itself grounded in a tolerance of ambiguity in which one implicitly recognises that the 'imaginary' and 'real' exist along a continuum (Morley 2003: 93).

James Morley has proposed the Merleau-Ponty's account of 'perceptual faith' can be used as a conceptual prism through which it is possible to view the common substratum across various forms of psychopathology. In particular, Morley draws attention to the manner in which psychopathology can be seen to involve a breakdown in the pre-reflexive 'perceptual faith' which, in health, underpins all experience:

Psychopathology is an instance where this faith in the reality of the perceptual world becomes precarious.... What is catastrophic for victims of hallucinations is their incapacity to feel confidence in both the perceptual and the imaginary. Such episodes, characterized by R.D.Laing (1962) as ontological insecurity, invoke a suspicion of the reality of any self or world – real or imaginary. The fact that pathological subjects cannot fully believe their experiences is precisely why they are so painfully unliveable (Morley 2003:99).

He continues, in a manner resonant of Hopkin's 'complexity' account of 'fictive' experiences:

Moreover it is the agitated anxious uncertainty that leads to the pathological project of absolute certainty. For example, a paranoid delusional system is preferable to the ambiguity of not having absolute possession of the other person's thoughts. The delusion of persecution, like all delusions, eliminates the ambiguity at the heart of intersubjectivity and makes life more liveable for the paranoid (Morley 2003: 99).

Merleau-Ponty therefore not only elucidates how psychopathology can involve deficiency of the imagination that bars the subject from accessing alternative courses of action, but demonstrates through 'perceptual faith' that this also entails the subject adopts a particular epistemic attitude towards imagination itself (Morley 2003; Steeves 2004). On a thematic level, this allows for some pertinent parallels to be drawn between Morley's interpretation of Merleau-Ponty and the psychoanalytic theories of psychopathology that stem from the 'mentalization' standpoint. For example, the fact that 'perceptual faith' is deployed in a state of pre-reflective automaticity allows comparisons to be drawn with the notion 'epistemic trust': both can be seen as primarily concerned with the *affective attitude* that an individual adopts towards incoming information (Fonagy et. al. 2016, 2017a, 2017b). In aiming to capture 'perceptual faith' Merleau-Ponty turns to Augustine's example of trying to describe time: the passage of time is an experience that all of us are intimately equated with, yet most struggle to describe it explicitly (Merleau-Ponty 1968:3). Similarly, in psychic health one does not consciously decide that other's communication can be a source of emotional learning but simply experiences it as such. As a result, the breakdown in 'epistemic trust' that occurs in severe forms of psychopathology such as Borderline Personality Disorder may be incredibly difficult (if not impossible) for observers (including clinicians) to access on an experiential

level (see Fonagy et. al. 2017a, 2017b), as it involves the collapse of a constitutive dimension of consciousness. Just as one cannot cleanly separate out veridical experience from illusion, one can never know in a definitive way that others internal worlds are accessible via their linguistic utterances (see following chapter for further discussion of this). Where individual's from 'good enough' circumstances have a developmental advantage in such areas, it can be argued, it is in the implicit belief that nothing catastrophic will come of mistaking truth for imagination or vice versa (Crittenden & Landini; Morley 2003; Winnicott 1958) For such individuals, predictability can be risked in favour of learning (Hopkins 2016), as failures in prediction never put the individual's survival in jeopardy (where 'survival' can entail psychical survival, or survival in phantasy rather than strict bodily survival) (see Crittenden & Landini 2011). In contrast, extreme forms of pathology, as Morley describes, entail a breakdown in this global trust that allows for healthy experience which can move flexibly within the imaginary-real continuum (Merleau-Ponty 1968; Morley 2003).

### **Trust and the Experience of the Self**

The importance an attitude of 'pre-reflective' faith – whether conceptualized through the philosophical or the psychoanalytic literature - can also be seen as fundamental to a robust and enduring sense of 'self' (see Chapter Six). As we saw in the previous chapter, the experience of an 'agentive self' is a requirement for adopting a 'mentalizing' stance: without it, the individual may be focused on the thoughts and feelings of others but at the expense of regulating their own affective states, leading to a 'hypermentalizing' stance which has little benefit in terms of psychological regulation (Bateman & Fonagy 2007, 2010; Fonagy & Luyten 2009). Along similar lines, it can be argued that a 'self' is important to consider in light of the current

discussion as it provides an important *internal counterpart* to the externally focused aspects of ‘reality oriented’ imagining sketched above. More specifically, the enduring sense of an ‘agentive self’ that is considered fundamental to health from a ‘mentalizing’ perspective may require a similar “tolerance for ambiguity” between the imaginary and the real as that which is called on in ‘perceptual faith’ (Fonagy et. al. 2002; Merleau-Ponty 1968).

It can be argued that the experience of something like ‘perceptual faith’ in relation to one’s own affectively grounded sense of self is especially pertinent in light of conceptual and empirical advances which have eschewed the ‘self’ as an ontological or metaphysical category in favour of theories which frame it as an illusion generated by neural processes (Fonagy & Luyten 2016; Gallagher & Zahavi 2008). For instance, in “the Self in Depression” Peter Fonagy and Patrick Luyten (2016) draw attention to this aspect of experience by noting its conspicuous breakdown in depressive disorders.

Depression may be associated with a range of subjective experiences that seriously threaten the coherence of the self: feelings of sadness, guilt, shame, helplessness, hopelessness, and despair disrupt the continuity of the self and are felt as extremely painful and inescapable, to the point that the depressed individual may have the feeling that he/she can no longer bear the psychological pain associated with these subjective states (Fonagy & Luyten 2016).

Yet to speak of depression as a disorder which targets the self implies that the self is a genuine, identifiable object of experiences, a position which has become increasingly difficult to defend from both philosophical and neuroscientific perspectives in recent years, with many thinkers in both camps adopting the position

that ‘self’ is simply an illusion generated by the brain. The ‘reification’ of the self as an object is a risk within the context of both our common sense pre-reflective understandings of one another and in theoretical psychoanalysis. As Fonagy and Luyten argue:

These metaphorical descriptions of the phenomenology of depressive experience have led to the reification of these self-experiences, as if we truly “have” a false or fragile self, or that we “have” an ideal and an actual self. These reifications are understandable: there has been a long tradition of reification and the use of metaphorical language concerning the self in psychology, in line with the use of the concept of self in folk psychology (e.g., “I find myself unattractive”, “I see myself as someone who has high standards for himself”). Similarly, notions such as cognitive-affective schemas of self, self-representations and internal working models of the self – within cognitive schema theory, psychoanalytic object relations and attachment theory, respectively – have become increasingly reified (Fonagy & Luyten 2016).

In order to avoid these ontological pitfalls, Fonagy and Luyten have suggested defining the self as the *individual’s capacity to generate stable self representations*, where mentalizing (‘reflective functioning’) is seen as the process which creates the illusion of a coherent self. This description can be considered, in some respects, compatible with writings on the self from a phenomenological perspective. As Gallagher and Zahavi argue, the phenomenological perspective is interested precisely in the self as experienced (no matter how it is produced) rather than the self as an ontological or conceptual construct (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008: 224- 225). Comparing phenomenological views of the self with the contemporary neuroscientific work by Damasio (1999) – who argues that all conscious experience is accompanied



by a “constant, but quiet and subtle, presence of self in my conscious life” (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008: 225)- Gallagher and Zahavi remark that “from a purely descriptive point of view, however, there is nothing new in the analyses offered by Damasio. We are dealing with a reformulation of ideas already found in classical phenomenology. To put it differently, the most explicit defence and analysis of what might be called the experiential dimension of selfhood is precisely to be found in classical phenomenology” (ibid 225). In line with the discussion above, this can be seen as a prime instance of empirical approaches and phenomenology forming a useful partnership, with neuroscience outlining the neurological basis for the emergent experience which is then captured on a phenomenological level.

Yet the perspective offered by Fonagy and Luyten (2016) once again challenges the phenomenological and neuroscientific account of an experiential self in a highly important respect. Much like the capacity for reflective functioning, they argue, a stable sense of self varies across individuals and contexts in a manner that can be directly linked with an individual’s developmental history (Fonagy & Luyten 2016). As a result, a developmental situation in which a mentalizing stance is not strongly set up (see Chapter Six) may leave individuals vulnerable to depression by diminishing the extent to which they can produce stable self representations through reflective functioning (Fonagy & Luyten 2009, 2016). This approach coheres with the notion that in BPD an individual’s sense of self becomes seriously compromised alongside failures in ‘mentalizing’: the two are interdependent to the extent that compromise of one leads to the compromise of the other (Bateman & Fonagy 2007, 2010). Not only does the experience of a sense of self also stem from a pre-reflective attitude of trust but, I will now argue, also contributes to epistemological dimension of ‘reality

oriented' imagining by offering a *stabilising force* which can be seen to transform epistemic uncertainty into 'negative capability'.

In order to draw this out, it will be useful to turn once more to Winnicott's writings on the development of an affectively grounded self (Winnicott 1958, 1971/2005). His account of early infantile experience can be seen to highlight two aspects of the 'true self' which are highly relevant to the argument at hand: the need for the infant to begin with a sense of trust in the environment in order for a 'true self' to develop, and the (later) need to tolerate the paradoxical nature of transitional phenomena in which the object can be experienced as simultaneously *both found and created*. (Winnicott 1971/2005). For Winnicott the 'true self' arises when the baby feels sufficient safety and trust in the presence of the caregiver that it can simply feel and express bodily experiences as they arise, thus grounding a sense of self in *directly felt experience* rather than thought or deduction. As Winnicott describes in "The Capacity to be Alone":

When alone in the sense that I am using the term, and only when alone, the infant is able to do the equivalent of what in an adult would be called relaxing. The infant is able to become unintegrated, to flounder, to be in a state in which there is no orientation, to be able to exist for a time without being either a reactor to an external impingement or an active person with a direction of interest or movement. The stage is set for an id experience. In the course of time there arrives a sensation or an impulse. In this setting, the sensation or impulse will feel real and be truly a personal experience.... It is only under these conditions that the infant can have an experience that feels real (Winnicott 1958: 418).

‘Feeling real’ is the product of an environment in which the baby feels safe enough to risk disintegration, because he trusts that such experiences will be reflected back by the caregiver in a manner that transforms bare physical sensations into a coherent sense of self which can be thought about (Winnicott 1958). Much like the developmental accounts provided from attachment theory and the ‘mentalization’ model, this account highlights the importance of external circumstances in developing a capacity for ‘reality oriented’ imagining: it is only *if* circumstances are trustworthy that the capacity for pre-reflective trust *genuinely is* adaptive rather than dangerous (Bowlby 1997; Crittenden & Landini 2011; Winnicott 1971/2005).

Schematically, such an account could be taken as a developmental perspective on ‘perceptual faith’: the infant who can develop a sense of herself as real will be able to use this as a stabilising force when facing an epistemically opaque environment (Merleau-Ponty 1968; McDowell 1996).

### **Negative Capability: An Epistemic Interpretation of ‘Creative Play’**

Negative capability, while not synonymous with ‘reality oriented’ imagining, aptly characterises its epistemic element. It can also be seen as a common feature of psychological health across various psychoanalytic approaches. For instance, negative capability was explicitly drawn on by Bion in “Attention and Interpretation” (1984) to characterise the ideal state of mind in a clinical situation in which the analyst approaches the patient “unencumbered by memory, desire or understanding” (Green 1973:119). Of more direct relevance to this project are the salient links that can be made between negative capability, Winnicott’s notion of ‘play’ (1971/2005: 51) and the act of successful mentalizing (especially across its implicit and affective dimensions (see Fonagy & Luyten 2009; Davidsen & Fosgerau 2015). Being in a state of negative capability, I will argue, is what allows one both to ‘play’ and to

mentalize effectively. Unlike Freud's secondary process, negative capability arguably has an *affective dimension* – an 'experiential underside' – which, following Amy Kind's argument (2001), can be seen to entail that it suitably characterised as a species of imagination rather than a type of pure conceptual 'thinking'.

Negative capability is a phrase coined by Romantic poet John Keats in a letter to his brother in which he wrote:

At once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously- I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties. Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason (Keats 1899 quoted in Hopkins 1984:90).

The concept of 'negative capability' has been enthusiastically taken up in psychoanalytic scholarship, particularly following Wilfred Bion's adoption of the concept in describing the ideal analytic attitude towards the patient (Bion 1984). In the Edinburgh International Encyclopaedia of Psychoanalysis Bion's position is described in a manner which emphasises its contribution to thought and learning:

Consequently, Bion argued that the analytic attitude should be one that eschews memory, desire and understanding in favour of the development of negative capability, reverie, or patience, until a selected fact is intuited, which may in turn act as an organising nexus for further conceptualisation.

It is negative capability in which the individual is genuinely open to 'learning from experience'; a psychic capacity which, for Bion, is the central aim of psychoanalytic practice. Green draws this aspect out of Bion's writings, stating:

Basically, the analytic function is to lessen the persecution of thought by itself and on to itself by reaching a state unencumbered by memory, desire and understanding. This is reminiscent of the practices of oriental wisdom which are so popular nowadays. In the turmoil that our present world witnesses, it is certainly a tempting solution (Green 1973: 119).

The reversal from Freudian thought here is drastic: rather than being in possession of declarative, secondary process knowledge about the contents of one's unconscious conflicts, the healthy individual is in an outward facing stance of comfortable not-knowing: a position in which the mind is genuinely open as a result of being unencumbered by "thought by itself and onto itself" (ibid).

In reading Bion, Green focuses on the importance of individual (whether they be analyst, patient or, as in his case, the reader of a text) not bringing preconceived ideas to bear on new experiences in a manner which precludes learning (Green 1973). Yet a particularly important aspect of negative capability for psychoanalysis is to tolerate the fact that one cannot easily discern what is *internally generated* from what is *given in experience*, a common theme between philosophical (McDowell 1996) and psychoanalytic (Winnicott 1971/2005) works. Since Klein developed the theoretical construct of 'projective identification', it can be argued that a post-Freudian view of pathology has focused on the manner in which individual's implicitly arranges the lump sum of their experiences into inside/outside and self/other dimensions (e.g. Sodore 2015: 41-55). Within the mentalization model 'reflective functioning' is heralded as a sophisticated process because it allows the subject to remain implicitly aware that she is attributing a thought or feeling to another, rather than simply experiencing her projection as a *given fact* (Britton 1998, Fonagy & Luyten 2009). As the 'reality' which psychoanalysis is invested in has become

increasingly interpersonal over time (see Greenberg & Mitchell 1983 and Chapter Three), 'realistic' thinking has increasingly moved into the realm of Winnicott's 'transitional phenomena' (Winnicott 1971/2005: 1- 35): the fact that one cannot directly access the minds of others entails that one must always be willing to tolerate the paradox of the object which is simultaneously found and created (Winnicott 1971/2005).

The relevance of 'negative capability' to the peaceful co-existence of internal and external reality has been drawn out by Brooke Hopkins (1984) in proposed links between negative capability and Winnicott's creative play. As we have seen already, Winnicott's notions of creativity and play are bound up with his understanding of experience as occupying a transitional space between internal and external reality. To live creatively within the realm of experience – to play – is to be successfully engaged in "the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated" (Winnicott 1971/2005:3). Inner reality contributes in a healthy way to experience through a sense of self which is grounded in bodily feeling. Hopkins draws on Winnicott's account of the development of the creative bodily self in her discussion of negative capability by linking it to the inherent bisexuality of individuals of both genders (Winnicott 1971/2005:107-109). This innate mix of the capacity for masculine activity and femininity being (existing without needing to take deliberate action) is what allows for the flexibility of play in which inner and outer reality can exist within the same experiential space without the tension of contradiction (Hopkins 1984). This ability is what Keats was referring to in his discussions on imagination and negative capability: "it was precisely the nature of that "interweave," the geography of that "intermediate area" that Keats set out to define and explore during this period. The result is a brilliant, if necessarily unsystematic, account of creativity,

of the conditions under which creative vision is possible (Hopkins 1984: 90). Keats' focus on the 'negative' in negative capability emphasises the importance of an inactive female element in epistemological arenas. Winnicott's writings therefore suggest a developmental perspective on an individuals' capacity for negative capability: the passive, female element that is related to *being with* and not *doing to* (or being done to) is grounded in the infant's ability to produce *spontaneous creative gestures*.

This developmental perspective is important in accounting for the internal, subjective side of the "intermediate area" that Hopkins has linked with negative capability. Put more simply, it demonstrates how the internal world can offer a positive (rather than simply inevitable) contribution to experience and how this might contribute to a psychologically healthy epistemic attitude. It also offers a psychoanalytically oriented account of how negative capability might manifest in very early experiences of being: the infant, in directly experiencing himself in his own bodily feeling and the gaze of the caregiver, does not need to "irritably" reach for coherence of experience through the development of a precocious intellect.

The themes expressed here follow several that we have seen across the course of this thesis. In many ways the healthy Winnicottian infant represents the ideal epistemological subject, managing to have 'friction' with objective reality without adhering unrealistically to coherent interpretive schemes or collapsing into senselessness (McDowell 1996, see Chapter Four). Furthermore, Winnicott's notion of the affective self as contributing positively to experience corroborates the claims of the mentalization model that successfully reflective functioning springs from the 'agentive self' (Fonagy et. al 2017a).

**Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter I have aimed to flesh out my account of the 'reality oriented' imagination on an experiential level, adopting a phenomenological framework in order to draw out how this form of imagining can be understood as a means of facing the environment in a manner which is grounded in both affect and the potential for future action and also contains an epistemic dimension which can be captured through constructs such as 'negative capability' and 'perceptual faith'. I will now turn to a discussion of the 'reality oriented' imagination as it specifically relates to language and communication.





## **Chapter Eight**

### **Truth, Trust and Interpretation: Re-assessing the Relationship between Language and Imagination in Psychoanalytic Theory**

The ‘reality oriented’ imagination as I have described it so far is both cognitively sophisticated and distinctly interpersonal; it represents the ability to envisage and hold in mind a range of possibilities about states of affairs that are not directly observable. This, arguably, lends it a high level of similarity with language. Symbolic language shares in common with the imagination the capacity to make the invisible visible and the absent present: it is potentially the most common way in which we transform internal mental states in external behaviour and come to know the minds of others.

Throughout this chapter, I hope to argue that the ‘reality oriented’ imagination is not synonymous with language but, rather, is a *precondition* for language to perform a range of psychological functions which underpin psychological health. Language may be co-opted in the service of sound ‘imaginative’ functioning – it could, indeed, be the best available representational vehicle for ‘reality oriented’ acts of imagination in mature adult life – yet the two cannot be reduced to one another. In order for certain benefits of language to flourish, language itself must be *experienced in a certain way*: as the kind of thing which can meaningfully apply to the self and to others; working with the ‘healthy illusion’ that what people communicate about their intentions tends to be roughly truthful (Cavell 1993, Fonagy et. al 2016, 2017a, 2017b). This in turn requires a substantial change in the psychological character and function of language proposed by Freud (See Chapters One and Two) by replacing the *structuring* force of language with its role as a vehicle of communication. Perhaps even more importantly, this view I am presenting also shifts the emphasis from the

particular to the global: where Freud was concerned with linking specific acts of unconscious activity with language as a means of lifting repression, the notion of epistemic trust (and its re-instantiation through therapy) is concerned with an individual's psychological relationship to language and communication *as a general phenomenon*.

In what follows, I will lay out the claim that there is a dimension of the 'reality oriented' imagination which applies directly to language and can 'set the tone' for how an individual will relate to spoken communication across their lifespan (Crittenden & Landini 2001; Fonagy et. al. 2016, 2017a. 2017b). It, too, has a set of developmental preconditions, which match those of a developing sense of self and agency: namely, being treated as an agent in an affective bond characterised by marked, contingent responsiveness (Fonagy et. al. 2002, see Chapter Six). This capacity for relating imaginatively towards language has been theoretically formulated through the notion of 'epistemic trust', an attitude of global faith in the fact that that what other people say regarding social and cultural phenomena is *the kind of thing that can be generalizable to the self* (Fonagy et al. 2016, 2017a, 2017b). Being in a state of 'epistemic trust' places one psychologically within a linguistic community which involves people with similar psychological experiences.

The core of the argument outlined below can be captured in a clinical snapshot presented b Ana-Maria Rizzuto in her work "Freud and the Spoken Word" (2015) in which she describes what can be best described as a breakdown in the patient's relationship with language and speech itself:

Meanwhile, my patients were conveying to me some of their feelings about words. A young anorexic woman almost chanted a mantra in response to my

words, saying “Those are only words. They do not mean anything to me.”

Similarly a woman in her forties with a twenty year history of bingeing and vomiting explained repeatedly with patient impatience, “This is like a play. You say your part and I say mine. But we don’t mean anything”. These patients taught me much about their conditions and showed me that a significant part of their pathology stemmed from emotional deprivation in their early relationships and in particular from disaffected patterns of communication in the family.

(Rizzuto 2015: 4)

### **Freud’s Theory of Language Revisited**

In Freudian psychoanalysis, language and reality oriented thinking share an intrinsic link. As we saw at some length in Chapter One of this work, Freud’s notion of conscious, ‘reality oriented’ thought (‘the secondary process’) is predicated on connections between ‘things’ and the words used to describe them; only when an unconscious ‘thing presentation’ is connected with its corresponding ‘word presentation’ can repression be lifted (Freud 1915a, 1923). The basic division of mental life into linguistic and non-linguistic ‘realms’ arguably began in Freud’s pre-psychoanalytic work ‘On Aphasia’ (1891), where he first suggested that the internal structure of a linguistic representation is vulnerable to internal deconstruction (Freud & Stengel 1891). It then remained a key theme throughout his work: John Forrester, for example, has convincingly argued that Freud’s theory on the nature and causes of aphasia can be conceptually mapped onto his later work on hysteria (Forrester 1980). While aphasia is a neurological condition which impacts the individual’s ability to use or understand language in general, hysteria is a psychologically motivated (and temporary) affliction that targets the representational structure of a *particular idea* that is causing an unsustainable amount of psychological conflict. In hysteria,

the idea which has been targeted for repression, as will be familiar, is broken down into components; its linguistic elements divorced from the other aspects which are then psychosomatically channelled ('converted') into a symptom (Breuer & Freud 1895). One can only know that the internal coherence of the repressed idea has been re-established when it can once again be expressed through speech (Breuer & Freud 1895). As Freud's psychoanalytic approach developed, he continued to use this general structure as a means of understanding both repression and the act of becoming conscious of an idea, which involves the disconnection and reconnection of word and thing presentations respectively (Freud 1915a, 1923).

Forrester's interpretation of hysteria in terms of Freud's theory of aphasia could be criticised for failing to take into account the fact that during this phase Freud was still working within the confines of the pre-psychoanalytic 'cathartic method' (See Sandler 2007 and Chapter One) and would therefore have favoured speech as a means of discharging psychic energy, rather than structuring an individual thought processes in a more 'realistic' manner (see Rizzuto 2015 for a full discussion of this argument against Forrester). However, irrespective of whether Forrester can be accused of misjudging Freud's theory of language at the time of writing "Studies in Hysteria", his observation holds for Freud's later metapsychological works, in which rational-conceptual aspects of language adopt a prime position (Freud 1915a, 1923). We can see this general principle at play in Freud's theory visual thinking: when asserting that mental imagery is a 'lower' form of thought, Freud does not focus on the fact that one cannot *communicate via an image*, but on the fact that images alone cannot represent the realistic causal and temporal links between ideas (Freud 1923:21) see Chapters One and Two).

There are two features of Freud's theory of language that Forrester's analysis draws to light that are useful for the discussion at hand. The first, as we have seen, is the fact that Freud was interested in language as a mechanism of organising thoughts internally, rather than a means of accessing an external, social world (a characterisation which falls in line with the Freud's position as an instinct theorist (Freud 1905b, 1924a, also discussed in Chapter Three of this work). Secondly, Forrester's analysis arguably demonstrates that Freud's psychoanalytic (as opposed to neurological) interest in language coincided with his shift away from analysing language as a global phenomenon and a corresponding movement towards the relation of language to particular ideas, belief, fantasies and memories. Between 'On Aphasia' and 'Studies on Hysteria' Freud could therefore be seen to 'psychologise' disturbances in the connection between thought and language by construing them as issues of specific psychic contents rather than general psychic function: while Freud certainly was of the opinion that linguistic 'quirks' exist in 'normal' non-aphasic individuals (see *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) for a vibrant range of examples) these centre on the content of particular utterances, word-plays and parapraxes, and not the individual's attitude towards language and communication in general.

Freud's focus on discrete instances of linguistic disruption may betray the fact that he took an individual's psychological relationship towards language in general for granted in much the same way that he helped himself to the idea of straightforward epistemic access to the external world in perception (Schimeck 1975). While the unconscious may have a distorting influence on both perception (e.g. transference (Freud 1912)) and language (e.g. parapraxes (Freud 1901)), Freud did not consider the inherent ambiguity in either process to be a source of

psychological disturbance. So far I have considered this idea at some length in terms of perception: theoretical and empirical advances from fields such as attachment theory and Bayesian neuroscience have demonstrated the mind/brain's need to reliably predict events is central to healthy mental functioning, with psychopathological processes often representing a drastic need to hold onto predictability even at the expense of openness to 'learning from experience'. (Clark 2016; Hopkins 2016). While Freud demonstrates a clear awareness that unmediated perception is metaphysically impossible through his numerous references to Kantian philosophy (e.g. Freud 1915a: 171), he did not believe that this posed a practical, quotidian problem for the individual. A similar general principle can be seen to underlie Freud's implicit philosophy of language. While unconscious processes may become manifest through speech and language, linguistic ability itself is thought to develop in a relatively uniform and straightforward fashion across individuals (Freud 1895; Freud 1911). As a result, it does not really make sense within a Freudian paradigm to speak of an individual adopting a psychological attitude *towards* language. This, once again, provides an interesting point of contrast to contemporary approaches. As we shall see below, recent thinking from attachment and mentalizing perspectives often take an individual's style of speech (such as its prosody) as indicative of distortions in thought and representation that provide a window into attachment styles and attendant vulnerabilities to psychopathology (Crittenden & Landini 2011). To take one example of many, Crittenden and Landini's work on the AAI (Adult Attachment Interview) suggests that participants who give jumbled and overly detailed answers to questions about their childhood attachment figures tend to have a preoccupied attachment style (Crittenden & Landini: 15). Secondly, the notion of 'epistemic trust' which has been developed as part of the

mentalization approach argues that the capacity for sound mentalizing depends on the ability to experience language as a psychologically meaningful phenomenon (Fonagy et al. 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). Individuals who cannot form a ‘trusting’ attitude towards the communication of others (taking linguistic utterances as a more or less reliable sign of unobservable thought processes) are considered to be in a state of ‘epistemic petrification’ which may underpin forms of psychopathology such as personality disorders (Fonagy. et. al 2015) .

There is a clear parallel between the changing nature of perception in psychoanalytic theory and the changing nature of language. In both cases, contemporary views place an emphasis on the state of epistemological uncertainty that the individual finds themselves in; a position which is most pronounced when considered from a developmental perspective. As we saw in the discussion of Bayesian perception in Chapter Four, one of the more remarkable features of the perceptual system is its capacity to learn from its own predictive models, assessing the reliability of data with very little ‘innate’ knowledge to guide it (Clark 2016: 17). A similar principle can be seen to apply to the development of language, in which the child must build up a representational world ‘from scratch’ without the aid of any prior knowledge. In both cases, the mind begins with (close to) nothing, and must develop a system for ‘bootstrapping’ knowledge in a reliable way so that it can build and evaluate knowledge as it goes. The epistemological stakes are arguably higher in the sphere of language than in the sphere of perception: information can only be transmitted (communicated) to an individual indirectly through language whereas the transmission in perception is more direct. This is especially pertinent in the case of developing language to describe internal, psychological states (Fonagy et. al. 2015). As the inner mental states that psychological language aims to capture are



themselves unobservable, their successful communication relies on a much greater degree of trust than language used to describe the inanimate, natural world that is directly observable to both the speaker and the listener. This, I will argue, leads to an interesting set of social preconditions for linguistic communication to occur successfully, which have been recognised by philosophical and psychoanalytic communities (Davidson 1967/1984; Cavell 1993, 2006). For instance, Donald Davidson's philosophy of language and interpretation (which has been helpfully applied to psychoanalytic theory by Marcia Cavell) in which he argues that in order for communication between individuals to even get off the ground we must start with the base assumption that what people believe and say is generally true and at least minimally rational (Davidson 1967/1984; Ludwig ed. 2006). I will suggest that some convincing links can be drawn between Davidson's insights and the notion of epistemic trust, which support the general idea that the use of and understanding of language can only grow in 'good enough' interpersonal conditions in which people's linguistic utterances do reliably match up with their internal mental states (Crittenden & Landini 2011). These ideas, taken together, challenge the Freudian notion that language takes on a psychopathological character when it becomes subject to the irrational structuring mechanisms of the 'primary process' and suggest, instead, that it suffers from a lack of integration with the 'reality oriented' imagination. Such an integration can allow linguistic behaviour, much like 'reality oriented' imagining itself, to become a prime arena for the kind of emotional learning that is thought to underpin successful affect regulation (Fonagy et. al. 2016; Hopkins 2016).

### **Speech and Attachment: The Dynamic Maturational Model**

Before returning to language and epistemic trust, it will be important to outline in more detail how language has been treated in the mentalization and attachment literature. Through doing this, I hope to strengthen my claim that linguistic representation itself is not sufficient for psychological health, it must occur in a certain *way*; namely, through the prism of the ‘reality oriented’ imagination. Although explicit dimensions of mentalizing can be seen to benefit from linguistic competence (although they are not necessarily *caused* by it), implicit and affective dimensions of mentalizing – those which I argued in the previous chapter are most intricately bound with a sense of self and agency – maintain an independence from language (Belsky & Shai 2011; Davidsen & Fosgerau 2015).

It will be particularly useful to consider how individual’s come to form a relationship to language within an attachment context. In particular, the work on the Dynamic Maturational Model by Patrician Crittenden and Andrea Landini can demonstrate the importance of an attachment context, most notably the role played by feelings of trust and safety, on an individual’s affective relationship to linguistic representations and communication. Firstly, in line with the argument presented here it provides a variety of evidence in favour of the claim that an individual often forms a psychological ‘relationship’ to language and communication as general phenomena, rather than to an isolated mental event (e.g. a belief, a fantasy). Secondly, it can allow us to emphasise once more the difference between veridical experience and imaginative engagement by stressing the difference *in kind* between secure and insecure speakers. Secure speakers, as we shall see, do not provide a ‘positive counterpoint’ to insecure speakers but represent an alternative means of functioning that is based on openness to learning from experience (Crittenden & Landini 2011).

Before we look at the speech dispositions of various attachment styles, it is worth giving some theoretical background. Attachment theory, as I have outlined previously, began as a measure for ascertaining observable behaviour caused by the level of security that an infant feels around her attachment figure(s) (Bowlby 1979/2005, 1997; Fonagy 2001). How, then, did this become applicable to linguistic behaviour? A potential response points to the fact that is normal for purely behavioural expressions to transform into a mixture of behavioural and linguistic expressions as the infant matures into a child. In this case, however, the continuity between the behavioural and linguistic expression lies in the *content* of the message expressed. The Dynamic Maturational Model, in contrast, analyses speech in terms of its *style*, looking at how speakers construct and convey meaning as a means of indirectly assessing their level of felt security. For example, the difference between preoccupied and dismissing attachments styles is not ascertained by what the speakers describe about their own attitudes towards attachment figures or how they present their childhood circumstances to the interviewer but, rather, by the degree to which speech is organized by affect or cognition respectively (Crittenden & Landini 2011:15).

Analysing speech in terms of style, it can be argued, allows for a much more nuanced and accurate analysis than could be gleaned from a consideration of linguistic content alone: it takes into account the fact that people not only distort information, but are usually unaware of the fact that they are doing it. Unlike the Strange Situation Scenario in which both caregiver and child are present and watched by a third (the researcher) no such 'objective' standpoint is possible within the Adult Attachment Interview and the interviewer must take into account the fact that the interviewee's portrayal of *both* their childhood circumstances *and* their

reported affective response to it will contain numerous distortions. Looking at the way information is presented will not lead the researcher to a more accurate view of what an individual's childhood circumstances were 'really' like, but they may flag up an individual's particular 'style' of distorting information. Furthermore, by looking at the processes through which representations are formed, the Dynamic Maturational Model is able to demonstrate how unconscious schemas and strategies are formed at a great level of depth, highlighting how distorting factors can come into play *prior* to thought, in the preconditions that make mental activity possible.

According to Crittenden and Landini, distortions in information arise in the form of *dispositional representations*: patterns of processing information that are strategic in so far as they dispose the individual to behave in a way that is (seemingly) adaptive to the situation at hand. Strategies for processing information can be seen to lead back to three evolutionary goals: to prevent danger to the self, to prevent danger towards one's offspring and to exploit instances of sexual opportunity. For the purposes of the current discussion, the protection against danger plays an especially important role in highlighting how the conditions within which thoughts are formed shapes their content. Notably, representations are constructed more rapidly in situations where there is a perceived threat in order to meet the danger as quickly as possible. As we shall see shortly, secure or 'balanced' speakers are so called because they tend to integrate information using various formats of representation from a range of memory systems. Integration, as we saw previously (see Chapter Six), is a comparatively lengthy process which requires the individual to be in a state where they do not feel under threat to reach a judgement quickly, allowing them to be in a state comparable to Keats 'negative capability' (Crittenden & Landini 2011; Hopkins 1984). Despite the fact that most grown adults

tend to adopt a range of dispositional representations (preferred processes), insecure individuals tend to be more consistent and less varied in their use of strategies than secure individuals as a result of feeling 'under threat' more often than secure individuals. The speed at which dispositional representations are formed by insecure individuals also prevents a satisfactory comparison of the current's situations similarity to events in the individual's past. In favouring self (or child) protection over openness to learning from experience, a judgment of similarity is likely to be assumed without the individual assessing whether this may only be skin deep. As a result, the approach of insecure individuals not only includes less representational variance within a schema or strategy, it also increases the likelihood that the same schema will be applied across a range of situations, even though for some of these it will inevitably prove maladaptive. As Crittenden and Landini state: "as threat increases, so does uniformity of strategy"<sup>48</sup>.

Attachment styles, therefore, do not simply refer to an individual's implicit set of beliefs but also to a differing attitude *towards* such beliefs. Secure individuals are more open to the fact that their initial appraisal of a situation may be wrong, allowing for a greater degree of flexibility than their insecure counterparts (see the relevant discussions in Chapters Three and Four). This flexibility, Crittenden and Landini have attempted to show, can be inferred from the way in which balanced adult speakers articulate themselves in an integrated fashion. But in order for us to fully understand how this attitude is cultivated in development, it is necessary not only to

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formulate a theory of how people speak but also how they listen and interpret information.

### **Language and Mentalizing: Epistemic Trust Revisited**

Language can be seen to play a prominent role in mentalizing in *both* its representational and interpersonal aspects. In so far as mentalizing occurs within the context of a relationship, it is concerned primarily with interpretation and communication, both which it has been claimed rely on the ability to form linguistic representations of psychological experiences (Fonagy et. al. 2002; Fonagy et. al. 2015, 2017a, 2017b). As we have seen (Chapter Five), Fonagy and colleagues have proposed the construct of ‘epistemic trust’ to denote the general attitude that individuals adopt towards social communication (Fonagy et. al 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). Epistemic trust may play a key role in human psychological development for evolutionary reasons (Csibra & Gergely 2009). The fact that human beings can ascribe psychological states to themselves and others is a unique trait not shared by other animals, including higher primates; the same is true of symbolic language (Fonagy et. al. 2015) The linguistic advantage enjoyed by homo sapiens over other primates and Neathderthals allows for the widespread transmission of social and cultural knowledge across generations.

Crudely speaking, there are two key routes to knowledge that we regularly employ: deduction and the appeal to authority. From an evolutionary perspective, the latter is both more efficient in terms of resources (it takes more time and effort to work out if something is true than to simply take it as such) and also inevitable at early points in life where we are dependent on others teaching us how the world is (Csibra & Gergely 2009; Fonagy et. al 2015). An attitude of *epistemic trust* within communities of homo sapiens is therefore to our distinct evolutionary advantage. As we have

already seen to some extent in Chapter Five, abuse, neglect and the ‘cumulative trauma’ of misattunement may lead, in extreme cases, to ‘epistemic petrification’: a state in which communication is understood in terms of its content but is not interpreted as having any emotional relevance to the self (Fonagy et. al 2015):

In a state of epistemic mistrust, the recipient of social communication may well understand what is being expressed to him/her, but he/she cannot encode it as relevant, internalize it and appropriately reapply it. The consequence of this is that the regular process of modifying one’s stable beliefs about the world in response to social communication is closed down or disrupted. This generates the quality of rigidity and being ‘hard to reach’ that therapists have often described in their work in the field of PD (Fonagy et al., 2015). Change cannot be made because although the patient can hear and understand the social communication transmitted to them from the therapist, this new information cannot be accepted as relevant to them and generalizable to other social contexts. The persistent distress and social dysfunction associated with PDs is the result of the destruction of epistemic trust in social knowledge of most kinds (Fonagy et. al 2017, accessed online).

Such a deferential attitude towards culturally transmitted knowledge, however, cannot be unbounded: we would not be successful species if we never critically evaluated the information imparted to us. Attachment theory shows us the extent to which we rely on our immediate caregivers to introduce us into the world of affective bonding and social interaction. Where factual knowledge may come from a variety of sources (such as school, other adults, the media) affective learning tends to be restricted to those on whom we emotionally depend. Knowledge of self and other gained in early interactions therefore runs a reasonable risk of not being transferable

to other social contexts (as what is adaptive in one social situation may not be adaptive in others). This is, in part, why successful attachment does not involve the automatic presumption that people are trustworthy but rather aims to evaluate situations based on their presenting features (Fonagy et, al 2015). In this regard, Fonagy and colleague's work on epistemic trust can work alongside Crittenden and Landini's work on language and attachment to grant a picture of a secure and healthy individual who is able to use language and communication as a prime arena of social and emotional learning, modifying their beliefs and perspectives in a manner that can aid affect regulation and, as a result, sound mental health.

### **A Philosophical Context for 'Epistemic Trust'**

The view of language that 'epistemic' trust engenders has the benefit of being in line with contemporary philosophical insights. Over the course of two books *The Psychoanalytic Mind* (1993) and *Becoming a Subject* (2006) Marcia Cavell has drawn out the relevance of the philosopher Donald Davidson's (2001) work on the connection between language, interpretation and mind to psychoanalysis. Cavell's aim, broadly stated, is to work against the insular picture of the mental functioning which she argues often found in Freudian psychoanalysis towards a picture in which psychological meaning is dependent, in part, upon external interpersonal context. In many ways she can be seen as making a conceptual and philosophical case for the psychanalytic paradigm shifts that I have described in this work (Cavell 1993).

Where her account does not hit the mark, I will argue, is in failing to account for the role of *trust* that I have emphasised throughout this work. Briefly considering her perspective will therefore allow me to conclude the argument presented here by bringing my position into sharper relief.



Although it is beyond the scope of this argument to do Davidson's philosophy any justice, it will be useful to briefly introduce his theory of radical interpretation in order to ascertain how Cavell applies it to the mentalization model. Most relevant will be his notions of Radical Interpretation (Davidson 2001) and the Principle of Charity (ibid). Piers Rawling introduces the notion of 'radical interpretation' by presenting the following scenario:

You find yourself stranded on a desert island with one fellow castaway. You rapidly discover that you cannot communicate with her; indeed, perhaps it is not clear initially that she has a language. You must build up your interpretation of her, as an agent, from scratch. How is such radical interpretation possible? Insight into the answer to this question is apt to tell us something quite general about what it is to speak a language, and to be interpretable as a speaker- about what it is, in short, to be a linguistic being (Rawling 2003).

The epistemological position that Rawling's imaginary castaway finds herself in can be compared to the position of the infant or young child who is becoming initiated into a community of speakers (Cavell 1993, 2006; Davidson 2001; McDowell 1996). Davidson's analysis is *conceptual*; he looks to establish what, in theory, would allow for radical interpretation rather than aiming to provide an empirical account of language acquisition in the same manner as the accounts discussed above (Davidson 2001; Ludwig 2003). Nevertheless, there is an important resonance between Davidson's philosophy and the mentalization model, in particular the literature on 'epistemic trust' which argues that having a mind is a developmental achievement which is established through acts of interpretation (across various dimensions) of the minds and self and other. Perhaps most important is Davidson's insight regarding the intrinsic link between belief and truth. Although as mature,

linguistically competent adults it is possible to be keenly aware that an individual's beliefs may not accurately reflect states of affairs Davidson shows us that unless we apply the 'Principle of Charity' to others: unless we assume that they are rational agents whose belief system is largely in tune with how things are in the external world, the process of interpretation cannot even get off the ground (Davidson 2001).

Marcia Cavell uses Davidson's paradigm in her recent work 'Becoming a Subject' (2006) to show how the infant is taught what words mean by her caregivers through the process of triangulation: both parent and baby are looking at the same thing in the world, and the baby comes to associate the parent's utterance with the object they are attending to. She then extends this to show how the baby learns to mentalize and thus self-regulate, although her argument appears to be based on a misunderstanding of the mentalization model. Looking at the nature of her misreading is interesting for the current argument because it highlights precisely why one must form an imaginative and trusting epistemological relationship with reality to be in good psychic health. Specifically, Cavell misses out the two-person developmental scenario in which the infant learns it has a self and a mind through caregiver's marked mirroring (Fonagy et. al 2002). In contrast, Cavell places the development in the triangular relationship between the infant, caregiver and the outside world, implying that infants learn that others have minds through a Davidsonian triangulation process. In short, infants see that the other sees the same world, but have a different perspective on it. As she argues:

I would emphasise that an aspect of this triangulating process that Fonagy and Target perhaps take for granted: the 'object' in question is a real person with whom the child is in communication, about a real external world, with material objects in it. So modified, their view is this: the child needs the repeated

experience over time of seeing that her own mental attitudes *towards something present to both her and an adult* are recognized by the adult, and of seeing that the attitudes towards this same thing are different from the child's. This same thing must be something clearly observable and common to the spatio-temporal world that they share" (Cavell 2006: 874)

Later, she continues:

The perception of something that is the same, outside both persons' minds, is necessary for the perception that they are perceiving it or thinking of it differently; and those dual perceptions are necessary for the further idea that one of these perceptions may capture something about the object that the other perceptions do not (Cavell 2006:895)

This analysis captures, to a certain extent, the role that the adult or older child may play in helping the young child integrate real and pretend modes of functioning in make-believe play (Fonagy et. al. 2002: 253- 291). Yet it does not grasp the process in which a sense of self and agency is formed through mirroring earlier in development (Fonagy et. al 2002: 145 – 203). What sets mirroring apart (indeed, what makes the term 'mirroring' so apt) is that it is trying to teach the infant about the unobservable internal world of the self within the context of a dyad in which no 'third' position is yet possible (see Britton 1998). It is an important part of this process that the entity that is the target for symbolization is *not* something outside the baby and the caregiver but is the mental states of the baby and the caregiver *themselves*. It is precisely the fact that there is no third, external referent which can be 'objectively' observed that places the subject in an epistemically vulnerable position where concepts such as 'epistemic trust' have a chance to take hold.

## Conclusion

Throughout this final chapter, I have applied my notion of 'reality oriented' imagining to issues regarding language and communication, arguing that contemporary approaches encourage a view in which individuals vary in the affective and psychological relationship they adopt towards language and communication. My view significantly challenges Freud's presentation of language on two counts. Firstly, it rejects the intrapsychic structuring role of language in favour of one in which language, much like the 'reality oriented' imagination generally, is a means through which the individual has epistemic and affective access to the world. Secondly, it shifts the emphasis from the contents of particular linguistic utterances (such as parapraxes) towards the psychological function of language as a whole.

The view of language presented above strengthens my account that sound psychic health requires the ability to form a sound epistemic relationship towards incoming information that is mediate through an individual's capacity to trust.



## **Conclusion**

Throughout this thesis I have aimed to demonstrate how an 'epistemic turn' in psychoanalytic theory leads to a renewed picture of the relationship between the subject and the external world, in which a sound epistemological relationship with reality can be seen as the basis for psychic health. I have proposed that the imagination, when construed as a 'reality oriented' force, can mediate this ideal epistemological relationship by combining a stance of 'negative capability' with a sense of self an active agent. When in a state of 'reality oriented' imagining, one is open to emotional and social learning in a manner that grants psychic health the active character that Winnicott calls for in "The Location of Cultural Experience" (Freud 1975/2005: 133).



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